THE RED, WHITE, AND GREEN

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"The white-coats poured in their volley. Page 190.

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"I shook my sword at the retreating figure. Page 364.]

The Red, White, and Green

By
HERBERT HAYENS

Author of "A Captain of Irregulars," "A Vanished Nation," "A Fighter in Green," "An Emperor's Doom," &c. &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
London, Edinburgh, and New York
1901

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THE RED, WHITE, AND GREEN.

CHAPTER I.

WILL THE REGIMENT MARCH?

"Cowardly rats, deserting a sinking ship!" exclaimed my brother Stephen; "I would not raise my little finger to help them!"

"It seems to me this insurrection will do good to our cause."

Stephen pushed his chair back from the breakfast-table, and stood up.

"We are Hungarians," said he, "and we fight for our nation. We want no assistance from these Austrian rebels. If they care a kreuzer for their country, why don't they rally round the emperor?"

Laughing at Stephen's expression of disgust, I crossed the room to the little window, and looked into the street.

It was the morning of October 5, 1848, and still fairly early, yet the people of Vienna were pouring by in hundreds, all eager, restless, and apparently too excited to think of such an ordinary thing as breakfast.

Some were mere lads, pale-faced and spectacled, but armed with sword and pistol, and looking very resolute; these were students from the public schools and universities. Mingling with these enthusiastic youths were a few shopkeepers, a more considerable body of respectably-dressed artisans, numbers of National Guards in uniform, and, most significant of all, the men from the slums--bare-headed, dirty, gaunt, but carrying knives, hatchets, clubs, and other death-dealing weapons.

Thus far, this year of 1848 had produced most remarkable changes throughout Europe.

Louis Philippe, King of the French, had been driven into exile; Sicily had revolted against King Bomba; insurrections had arisen at Madrid; the whole of Germany had been, and was, in a state of turmoil; the Prussians had conquered Poland afresh.

Thrones had crumbled into dust, and monarchs and rulers had been swept away like chaff before the wrath of the people.

But of all the European countries, none in this wild gale of popular fury was so severely tried as the proud empire of Austria.

In northern Italy, the veteran Radetzky was upholding the black and yellow flag of Austria against a host of insurgents; in Bohemia, the Slavs, bent on founding a great Slav nation, were suppressed with difficulty by the Austrian general, Prince Windischgratz; my own gallant land of Hungary had drawn the sword to

win back the ancient rights of which it had been deprived by the Viennese government; while here at Vienna, in the very heart of the empire, thousands of men were working their hardest to overthrow their own Kaiser.

With these people neither Stephen nor I had the least sympathy. We were Hungarians, but royalists, loving our country with a fond and faithful affection, yet wishful to preserve our loyalty to the emperor-king.

News of the dispute between Hungary and Austria had reached us in London, and we had just arrived at Vienna on our homeward journey.

My brother Stephen was eighteen years of age, and my senior by twelve months.

In figure he was tall and elegant; his face was regularly oval, with a pale complexion; his forehead was high and broad, his mouth small and well formed. His black hair fell in long curls almost to his shoulders; he wore a black moustache in the Hungarian fashion; and his eyes were dark and fiery.

A true Magyar, every inch of him, he might have stood beside King Stephen of glorious memory.

He came to join me at the little window, and we were still gazing intently at the throngs below, when some one, hurrying up the stairway, knocked at the door.

"Come in!" I cried, and turning round added hastily, "Why, it is Rakoczy, looking as miserable as a caged bird! Are the folks too busy demonstrating to get you some breakfast?"

The newcomer closed and locked the door, and came over to us.

John Rakoczy, or "John the Joyous," as we called him, was, like ourselves, a Hungarian, though there was a slight mixture of German blood in his veins.

He was a handsome man, several years older than myself, with chestnut hair, dark-blue eyes, and a frank, open, jovial face.

His merry laugh and light-hearted manners had earned him the title of "John the Joyous;" but on this October morning his face was gloomy and troubled.

He placed himself between us, so that he could speak to both without raising his voice.

"Heard the news?" he asked.

"We've heard the row!" I replied. "These poor people will strain their throats."

"The city's in a state of insurrection. The students and the Nationals and the Burgher Guards are going to overthrow the government."

"Barking dogs never bite," said Stephen sarcastically.

"These will soon--they're only sharpening their teeth; and the Richters are to help them."

"The Richter Grenadiers?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. Our fellows have beaten Jellachich, who is in sore straits; and Latour, the war minister, has ordered the grenadiers to march to his assistance. They are in a state of mutiny, and the citizens are backing them up."

Earlier in the year, Croatia, under its Ban or Governor, Baron Jellachich, had revolted from Hungary; and though at first the emperor had denounced the rising, he had now taken Jellachich under his protection.

"Count Latour can take care of himself," said Stephen; "he is a man, not a lath."

Our companion rubbed his hands together softly, and, lowering his voice to a whisper, said,--

"This affair is serious. Don't ask how I obtained the information, but you can rely on its truth. A secret meeting was held last night in the city. The chiefs of the extreme party were present, and to-morrow, when the regiment marches out, has been fixed for a general rising."

"This is interesting to the Viennese," said my brother, "but not to us."

"Wait a bit. You know what happened a few days since in Pesth?"

Stephen's face flushed with shame, and I hung my head.

On September 28, Count Lamberg, the Austrian commander-in-chief, had been seized in the streets of Pesth by an armed rabble, and cruelly put to death--a foul crime that would long stain the fair name of Hungary.

"To-morrow," Rakoczy continued, "the victim will be Count Latour, and the butchers will cry, 'Long live Hungary!'"

"What do we want with such brutes?" cried Stephen passionately. "Cannot we fight and win our battles with our own swords? We shall be disgraced for ever by this rabble!"

"The count must be put on his guard," I exclaimed. "I will go to his hôtel and inform him of the plot."

"It will be useless trouble," said Stephen. "One man cannot fight against thirty thousand, and the count is too brave a veteran to yield."

"He must yield or die," said John. "I have learned enough to know that. The chiefs of the revolution have decided to kill him unless he recalls the order for the regiment to march."

I put on my hat; the others did the same, and accompanied me into the street.

A crowd of students rushing by caught sight of our costume, and surrounding us, cried, "Long live Hungary!"

Much to their surprise, we bared our heads and responded by a hearty, "Long live King Ferdinand!" for, although our country was at war with Austria, we remembered that Austria's emperor was Hungary's king.

In the square on the north side of the hôtel we stopped, and I gave my

weapons to Stephen, so that the guards might not suspect me of having any design on the life of the minister.

"Tell him," said Rokoczy earnestly, "that unless he gives way his life is lost."

I left them standing at the corner of the square, and went on alone to the courtyard of the hôtel.

Hundreds of citizens stood about, all armed and gesticulating violently, but as yet offering no personal mischief to any one. Several times I had to stop while they cheered for Hungary and Kossuth; but at length, after considerable pushing and squeezing, I reached the gate.

There were few soldiers about, and these could certainly have been overpowered by one determined rush of the mob outside; but the time for that had not yet come.

At first the officer on duty made some difficulty about passing me; but at length I was sent under escort across the courtyard, and admitted into the building.

Here still further delay occurred. Count Latour was busy; he could not see me; it would be better to call another time, or deliver my message to the count's secretaries.

Patience, however, is a useful weapon, and by its aid I found myself at last in the audience-chamber, where the minister was engaged in animated discussion with his colleagues.

"Well, young sir?" exclaimed the noble-looking veteran sharply. "Your news must be of extreme importance to justify your persistence."

"You shall judge for yourself, count, if these gentlemen will leave us for five minutes."

At this the others smiled, and one muttered something about a Magyar adventurer.

I had entered the room with peace in my heart; but this insult was abominable, and I loudly demanded to know if they took me for an assassin.

A little old man with a white beard and small ferret eyes stopped my high-flown speech by saying, "Remember Lamberg!" and at those words, so full of meaning, I hung my head in shame.

Would that fatal act be thrown into the teeth of the Magyars for ever?

I think that the count must have pitied me, for he said kindly,--

"What is your name, my young friend? It is needless to ask your nationality."

The question restored my self-respect, and I raised my head proudly.

"George Botskay has little reason to be ashamed of his name," I said.

"A son of the late General Botskay?"

I bowed in reply, and the count addressed a few words to his colleagues, who retired one by one with evident reluctance.

"Now, my lad," exclaimed the fine old soldier, "what is it you wish to say? I am very busy, and cannot spare much time."

"I have come to warn you, count," I began, but at that he stopped me.

"The son of General Botskay should have known that I take no warning from rebels," he said sternly, and made a movement to ring the bell.

"One moment, count; you must listen to me. I have learned by accident something you ought to know. The city is up in arms"--Latour smiled--"and the grenadiers are to be prevented from marching."

"I have issued the order," he said, as if that settled the matter.

"It will not be obeyed. The leaders of the insurrection met last night in secret, and made their arrangements. A revolution has been decided on, and you, count, are to be the first victim."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"That you may be prepared."

"Are you on our side?"

"No. I must fight for my own country."

He took a sheet of note-paper from a drawer, and placing it in my hand, said, "Read!"

It was an anonymous letter, warning him that unless he recalled the order, the people would put him to death.

"It came this morning," he remarked quietly. "The writer will learn my answer to-morrow."

Gazing at the well-knit figure and the calm, proud face of the sturdy veteran, I felt convinced that he would not move a finger to avert the impending tragedy.

"You seem sorry," he said, "but there is little to grieve about. I am a soldier, and know how to die at my post. Still, I thank you for trying to help me; and may the time soon come when Austrians and Hungarians will once more join hands as brethren and loyal subjects of the emperor."

"Amen to that!" I replied fervently, and the proud old noble, shaking my hand, himself led me to the door.

At the head of the stairs I turned and glanced at him again. He waved his hand cordially; his features were calm and unruffled, his air was serene, as though he knew nothing of the dangers which threatened him.

Brave old count! After all, he chose the better part!

Rakoczy and my brother waited at the corner of the square, but they saw at once that my errand had been in vain.

"He will die at his post, if need be," I said, as we got clear of the crowd.

"What else could he do?" asked Stephen. "You would not expect the soldier of half a century to run away from the armed rabble."

"Well," exclaimed Rakoczy, "we have done our best to save him; now we

must look to ourselves. I suppose you two intend joining the army?"

"Yes; but we will wait and see what happens to-morrow."

"If you could stay a few days longer, we might all go together."

This proposal suited me capitally; and as Stephen did not wish to lose the speaker's company, it was agreed that we should remain in Vienna till the end of the week.

"We aren't likely to miss much," said Rakoczy. "Kossuth can do nothing till the Honveds have been properly drilled. At present they are no better than these worthy citizens who shout 'Long live Hungary!' so abominably."

The Honveds, or Home-Defenders, were practically peasants drawn from the plough, without drill or discipline, or even knowledge of arms beyond their scythes and pikes and cumbrous old-world guns.

No general would expect them to stand for an instant against the Austrian veterans; and, as Görgei, our great leader, humorously said, he reckoned much more upon their legs than their arms.

However, they were brave fellows at bottom, and those who laughed at them had reason to repent of it before the war ended.

During the afternoon Rakoczy left us to attend to his private affairs, so Stephen and I strolled about the city watching the actions of the excited people.

It was easy to tell that something out of the common was going to happen; and when we returned to our rooms I felt more sorry than ever for the brave old count, who so proudly defied the enemies of his master.

But to help him further was beyond our power; we could only wait and watch the events of a new day.

It was certain that Latour would not withdraw his order; but whether he would meet force by force and command Count Auersperg to bombard the city, or offer himself as a sacrifice to the fury of the mob, we did not know. From midnight till about three o'clock a dead silence brooded over the town, but when daylight fairly broke Vienna was in arms.

Rakoczy joined us at breakfast, and by his advice we ate a substantial meal before venturing out, as the time of our return was very uncertain.

"Now," said he, on rising from the table, "pistols in working order? There will be a big *kravalle* before the day's over."

"If it's nothing worse than that, so much the better," I replied. "A street brawl doesn't hurt."

Stephen locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and we all three went down into the street, where the people were packed like herrings in a barrel.

Men, women, and children of all classes were there--the shopkeeper, the artisan, the labourer, and the dweller in the slums who had come out expressly for plunder, and who would as soon cut a Hungarian as an Austrian throat. One

of this last class, however, a brawny fellow, hatless and coatless, with arms bare to the elbow, and carrying a murderous-looking axe, professed great sympathy with the Magyars, and attached himself to Stephen, much to the latter's disgust.

John and I walked directly behind, laughing to see my rather fastidious brother in the society of the *soi-disant* patriot.

"Keep a brave heart, young sir!" we heard the unwashed one say, "and trust to us. We'll see you get your rights. Down with the emperor and up with the people! It's our turn now!" and he put one arm affectionately round my brother's waist.

"Bravo, comrade!" cried John, winking at me. "The brave Viennese will take care of Hungary!"

"Right you are, brother!" shouted back the brawny ruffian. "We'll join hands. Long live Hungary and the Viennese! No more emperors! No more kings! We'll have a republic and be our own masters!"

"And not do any more work!" said John.

"No; we've had our share. Let the rest take a turn;" and he gave Stephen another squeeze to show his goodwill.

Happily for my brother's peace of mind, we had by this time reached the end of the narrow street, and a vigorous push by the crowd parted us from our enthusiastic friend.

We had started with the intention of going to the hôtel of the war minister, but it soon became plain that we had no choice in the matter; we were compelled to go wherever the mob carried us.

One thing I noticed which rather astonished me--the National Guards and the armed students had disappeared. Here and there one certainly caught sight of a citizen warrior, but they were very few, and I wondered what had become of the others.

"We shall soon find out," said Rakoczy, to whom I put the question. "There's mischief brewing somewhere. Listen to, that!" and a great shout of "Long live the Grenadiers!" rose on the air. The people, sufficiently excited hitherto, now became frantic. They waved their arms, and cheered the mutinous regiment wildly.

"Link arms!" exclaimed Rakoczy, and it was well we took his advice. A tremendous rush nearly took us off our feet, and we were carried along in the midst of the tumultuous throng.

"Tabor! Tabor!" shouted the crowd. "Make for the bridge of Tabor! That's where they cross! Hurrah for the Grenadiers! Down with the emperor! Death to Latour! Long live the brave Hungarians!"

As we approached the bridge of Tabor the excitement became intense. We were pushed this way and that, and, but for the linking of arms, we must quickly have lost sight of one another.

"Keep a firm grip," cried John. "Look out! There goes the military!" and instantly the cheers for the Grenadiers redoubled.

"There's a cavalry regiment escorting them," I exclaimed; "and look! Some one has brought up a couple of guns!"

"They want twenty," said Stephen. "Ah! now for it!"

At the farther end of the bridge the National Guards and the University Legion were drawn up in battle array, waiting to oppose the passage of the troops.

The mob pressed to and fro like the unquiet waves of the sea; now we were thrown almost bodily into the ranks of the soldiers, again carried back many yards.

The windows of all the houses anywhere near were filled by groups of rioters, who levelled their guns ostentatiously at the loyal troops, while the *sans-culottes* in the streets roared approval.

At the moment my brother spoke we had a full view of the situation.

The Grenadiers, with their escort, had reached the bridge-head. Behind them were a body of infantry and the artillerymen with a couple of guns. An officer in general's uniform commanded the whole.

Suddenly the Grenadiers broke loose, and, with triumphant cries of "Long live Hungary!" crossed the bridge at the *pas de charge*.

The students and Nationals received them with open arms; the general sat on horseback, immovable as a bronze statue. Then a smile, half of pity, half of scorn, appeared on his face. He opened his mouth to give an order, when, from the farther side of the bridge, rang out a sharp report, and the Austrian fell dead.

Stephen tore himself from me, his eyes flashing, his handsome face crimson with anger.

"You cowards!" he cried, and would have run to the bridge had not Rakoczy dragged him back by main force. Only just in time!

Crash! And a storm of grape whizzed through the air as the gunners discharged their two pieces.

The insurgents who were advancing to the charge wavered; another dose of iron hail, and they fell back in disorder.

But the loyalists were few, their enemy legion.

Their brave leader, too, was dead; and, though they fought valiantly for a time, the end was certain.

The students especially behaved like madmen. Shot and shell tore through their ranks, making long, narrow gaps, but the survivors pressed on; the mob picked off the loyalists; the men at the windows shot them down; the Nationals eagerly backed up their comrades; the bridge was gained; there was a desperate, confused, hand-to-hand struggle round the guns, and then a loud shout of victory echoed and re-echoed through the exultant multitude.

"To the gates! Seize the gates!" they yelled; and presently another cry rose-

-one which we had been expecting every moment to hear.

"Death to Latour!" bawled a huge, hairy-throated fellow; and we recognized our acquaintance of the morning, whose butcher's axe was wet with blood.

"That's the word!" cried another. "Death to Latour, and no more ministers!"

"Forward! Forward! Long live the republic! Up with the tricolour!"

"To the hôtel!" said Stephen feverishly. "We may yet help to save him."

Alas! if we were powerless in the morning, we were equally so now. The mob carried us whithersoever it listed. We were flung bodily from side to side, shot down narrow streets like stones from a catapult, jammed together without power of movement, then pushed forward again by the masses in the rear.

Rakoczy soon disappeared. Stephen was yards in front, separated from me by hundreds of yelling madmen. I was panting and breathless, and felt as if some one had beaten me well with a stout stick.

A man just before me--a small, pale man with wide-open, frightened eyes--went down, and was lost in the crowd; it was like dropping a pin.

Had his life been worth the value of the universe, no one could have saved him; as it was, he simply dropped, like a stone into the water, and the crowd pressed over him.

To add to the uproar, the tocsin sounded, and everywhere it seemed as if the soldiers were discharging their muskets.

In one street people were busy erecting a barricade. The head of the crowd, seeing this, wished to turn back; they might as well have tried to turn the stars in their course.

The street was narrow and sloping; unfortunately, we shot into it from the higher end, and there was no stopping.

Those in front raised a cry of despair as they were hurled against the half-built barricade, the workers on the other side of which ran into the houses, while the living torrent swept on.

Crash went the structure--logs of wood, bodies of carts, stuffed sacks, piles of stones, and human beings all mingled together! I caught a brief glimpse of Stephen wedged into the corner of a doorway, looking as if he would be squeezed to death, but there was no helping him.

I was off my feet, supported only by the bodies of my nearest companions, one of whom moaned in pain.

Through the *débris* we were hurled, swept round the corner to the left, and

dropped, panting and bruised and battered, in the Place of St. Stephen.

CHAPTER II.

A SOLDIER OF THE RIGHT SORT.

I stood for several minutes between the palace and the great church trying to draw some breath into my lungs, for the pressure of the crowd had left me like a squeezed lemon.

To search for the missing Rakoczy was useless labour, but it might be possible to return to the narrow street where I had last seen my brother.

I soon discovered, however, that the short delay had put that also out of the question. The people were pouring into the Place; and, though the terrible stress had been lessened, I was still a prisoner, blocked in on all sides by the tumultuous throng.

The huge bell in the tower of St. Stephen's clanged out its brazen peals of warning and menace, and a sharp musketry fire told me that fierce fighting was going on in the very shadow of the sacred edifice.

A handful of loyal National Guards, faithful to their oaths, and led by a brave commander, were, like good men and true, sacrificing their lives in the performance of duty.

Of course, the contest was a hopeless one; but the men stood their ground bravely, and I guessed from the savage cries of the rioters that the faithful few were selling their lives dearly.

From where I stood nothing could be seen save the heads of the populace; but the surging of the crowd backward and forward showed how the fight progressed.

Clang! clang! pealed the great bell, swinging high in the air, while below the whirr and rattle of musketry mingled with the frantic shouts of the people.

A louder yell than usual proclaimed that something decisive had occurred, and soon the news spread to the very outermost of the packed onlookers.

"Now they have them! Into the church! Follow them up! Well done, brave Nationals! Well done, students! Now we'll see who's to be master!"

It was even so. The gallant band, overwhelmed by numbers, had fallen back

foot by foot, until the insurgents by one wild rush had forced them into the cathedral, where their leader was slain on the high altar itself.

All this I learned only from the conversation of the people, being unable to see anything for myself.

But from what happened next I might easily have known the end had come.

From the middle of the throng a cry rose, and the multitude in their thousands took it up, shouting wildly, "Latour! Death to Latour!"

This way and that they rushed, some to the south, some to the north of the Place, seeking any outlet which would lead them to the hôtel of the minister of war.

In an instant I was caught up and hurried off out of the Place, across a wide street, then into a network of narrow ones, until I was stopped with the rest in front of the hôtel where lived Count Latour.

Was he still there? There had been ample time for escape, and I hoped against hope that he had taken advantage of it; but, remembering the calm, proud face of the man, I had my doubts.

The gates were closed; the soldiers, scanty in numbers but well disciplined, stood at their posts, eyeing the frenzied mob with contempt.

Some of the students at once opened fire; the soldiers replied, and, the target being so broad, every bullet lodged somewhere.

Inside the building Count Latour was holding a council of war, and the members, fearful lest in the growing excitement the monarchy itself should be swept away, prevailed on him to issue the order to cease firing.

This of course paralyzed the action of the loyal troops, both at the hôtel and at the barracks, while the spirits of the rebels were proportionately raised.

From the conversation of those near me, I gathered that their surprise was equal to their delight, but they gave no thought to the humanity of those in power.

The fearful cry, "Death to Latour!" was again raised. The gates were threatened. The soldiers, prevented from firing by the order of the council, were unable to act. Fresh bodies of rioters came swarming from various directions. The pressure grew terrible; the gates--I suppose, as I could see nothing--gave way; the courtyard was filled with the noisy, shouting, bloodthirsty pack; the doors of the great building were smashed like glass; and the crowd, screaming and struggling, surged up the broad staircase.

At the first rush some were thrown violently against the outer walls; others, by no power of their own, were carried into the interior of the building, and fate so willed that I belonged to the latter portion. The name of the gallant old count was on the lips of every one, as if he were responsible for all the ills in the world, so easy is it to inflame the passions of a mob which does not think for itself.

It was on the first landing that we received a slight check.

A few National Guards, still loyal to their pledges, attempted to stem the human torrent. Their success was only momentary, and they were borne back, but not dispersed.

Here the crowd broke up, some running one way, some another, but all intent on killing Count Latour.

I followed the Nationals, thinking they would most likely retire in the direction of the council chamber.

This they did, and that apartment was speedily filled. I caught a glimpse of Latour, round whom the handful of loyalists pressed. His face was pale; otherwise he showed no sign of fear, but gazed calmly on the throng of butchers. Once he made an attempt to speak, but his words were drowned in the tumult.

"Kill Latour!" was the savage cry. Beyond that one scarcely heard anything.

However, the brave Nationals resolved to make a fight of it, and by a stroke of great good fortune I managed to join them.

"Long live Latour! Long live the gallant count!" I cried, with all the strength of my lungs, and his defenders echoed the cry.

But the others drowned our shouts with "Kill Latour!" and one man, towering above the rest, sprang at the count with uplifted axe.

It was the burly ruffian who had walked with us a short time in the morning, and at sight of me his face grew black as a thunder-cloud.

"Traitor!" he shouted, and, swinging round, aimed his axe full at my head.

There was little time for action, much less for thought; but, having my pistol free, I levelled it swiftly, and shot the truculent bully dead.

The count threw me a glance of gratitude mingled with pity; and in truth it appeared as if I needed the latter.

The insurgents rushed at us, bore us back, flung themselves into our midst, and, acting like wedges, split us into small groups.

I found myself in front of Latour, where the fighting was fiercest, and emptied my pistol recklessly into the crowd.

The bullets cleared a space, but it was soon reoccupied. Most of the loyalists were overpowered and disarmed, and now their opponents came to help seize Latour.

Planting my feet firmly on the ground, I stood by the side of the veteran, and did my best to save him.

The attempt failed; it was hopeless from the start, and the end came very suddenly.

There were scarcely half a dozen of us all told, standing shoulder to shoulder, to stay the rush, and we toppled over like so many wooden pegs.

I lay on the floor half stunned, with the body of a man right across my chest. He was badly hurt, and kept moaning feebly.

For several minutes I was unable to rise, or even to move, and during that time the noise of the fighting grew less and less distinct, finally dying away altogether.

The shouts of the populace, however, continued to ascend from the courtyard, and could be plainly heard through the open windows.

As soon as I had recovered a little strength, I shifted the wounded man gently, and stood up.

The rioters had left the apartment; only the dead and those seriously injured remained, and amongst these I looked in vain for Latour.

Had they spared his life? The idea seemed too good for truth, but it was just possible.

Picking up an abandoned sword, I made my way from the chamber to the staircase. Several bodies lay where they had fallen; otherwise the place was empty.

I ran down to the first landing, and overtook a frightened, pale-faced man--a servant, probably, belonging to the hôtel. The fellow looked at me with such a comical expression of woe, that, in spite of the day's work, I could hardly refrain from laughing.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," I said, slapping him on the shoulder. "I'm not going to eat you. What have the rebels done with Count Latour?"

The man's eyes opened wider than before. He bowed his head and mumbled some words which I could not understand.

"Speak up!" I cried sharply, "or, by the honour of a Botskay, I'll throw you over the balustrade."

The threat reduced him to a state bordering on imbecility. He made no attempt to speak, but, plucking at my cloak like a chidden dog, led me into a small chamber having a window which overlooked the courtyard.

What I saw there held me spellbound; and the man, seeing he was no longer noticed, quietly slipped off.

Outside, Count Latour, the minister of war, the veteran general who had carried the black and yellow flag to victory a score of times, who over and over again had risked his life to uphold the honour of his country, hung, battered and dead, suspended from a lamp-post.

The mob still lingered about, but in smaller numbers; the most violent had departed to pursue their work of butchery elsewhere.

Many of the disloyal National Guards, who found it easier work to insult a dead man than to combat a living one, swaggered about, looking fierce and truculent. Some decently-dressed citizens regarded the murdered count, it appeared to me, with pity and sorrow; even to some of the insurgents remorse had come with terrible swiftness.

The students and men of the slums had gone--the former to fight, the latter most likely to plunder. More peaceable people helped to fill up the gap thus caused.

I left the room and descended the stairs slowly, thinking of Stephen. Where was he? Had he been killed by that terrible crush in the narrow street? Perhaps he was still there, hurt and unable to move. I must go and find out.

On the lower part of the staircase I met numbers of citizens coming to view the scene of the struggle.

I stood aside to let them pass, and they, recognizing my nationality, saluted me with the cry of "Long live Hungary!" I thought of the dead man outside, and the blood surged to my face.

In the courtyard there was room to move freely, and, anxious on my brother's account, I was hurrying away, when the sound of a girl's voice coming from the left caused me to stop.

A low, angry growl from a section of the onlookers told me something was wrong, and I ran to the spot.

A young girl, evidently of high birth, stood facing a group of Nationals. Her head was uncovered, and her hair hung down her back in a thick, wavy, chestnut-coloured mass. She had a beautiful face, sweet and fresh as the morning; her features were regular and refined; her dark-blue eyes were of wonderful depth and expression.

She was slightly, almost delicately framed, and little more than a child in years; but the inherited pride of centuries burned in her face, and she confronted the citizen soldiers fearlessly.

Standing erect, with her head thrown back defiantly, she pointed to the body of the murdered man, and, with a superb gesture of scorn, exclaimed in a ringing voice, "You pitiful cowards!"

The crowd murmured, some in sympathy, others in anger. Several of the Nationals moved as if to chastise the speaker, but she did not quail.

One, a bigger poltroon than his fellows, placed his hand on her arm; but at that instant I sprang to the girl's side and sent the aggressor sprawling.

"It is true!" I cried recklessly. "You are a pack of cowards to murder an aged and unarmed man!"

"A Hungarian and a traitor!" shouted a voice from the crowd.

"No traitor," I replied, "as I hope my sword may prove; but no assassin either."

"Don't be a fool," said the unseen speaker, but using now the Hungarian tongue. "What is the daughter of an Austrian noble to you? These others are our friends, and they have done no worse than we did in Pesth."

"Knock him on the head, and the girl too!" cried one of the soldiers; but he kept clear of the sword which I had brought from the council chamber.

"Leave me, sir," implored the high-spirited girl. "The butchers will kill you. I do not fear them."

I looked at her in smiling admiration, and said, "A Magyar does not leave a lady in distress. Permit me to take you away from this crowd."

Thinking perhaps of my danger, she shuddered slightly, and passed her arm within mine, while I prepared to guard her with my life.

We might have escaped without further trouble, but for the action of one of the Nationals, who, angered by the girl's taunts, threw himself across our path.

I requested him to stand back, but he refused insolently, and endeavoured to run me through with his bayonet.

At this several of his comrades came to his assistance, and there was nothing for it but to cut my way out.

Some of the citizens now interfered, crying "Shame" on the soldiers for attacking a girl; and, while our opponents stood undecided, I received a welcome though unexpected reinforcement.

There was a movement in the crowd as of a person pushing his way through; and all at once I beheld my brother, who, crying, "A Botskay to the rescue!" sprang between us and the soldiers.

In either hand he held a loaded pistol, and there was an air of determination in his handsome face which showed he would not hesitate to fire.

I had just told the girl who the newcomer was, when a second man broke through the crowd and joined us.

A giant of a fellow he was, wearing a round hat and furred coat, and carrying in his hand a ponderous club which would have crushed the skull of an ox.

My fair companion cried delightedly, "Franz! Franz!" and the man bowed to her with an air of respectful deference.

His countenance was of a ruddy colour, his hair sandy; he had pleasant blue eyes, a cheerful face, and the massive limbs of an athlete.

"Make way there!" he cried, twirling his tremendous club as if it had been a soldier's cane; "make way there for the Fräulein von Arnstein!"

A portion of the spectators, crying, "Room for the Fräulein von Arnstein!" hustled the soldiers, who, being pressed by Franz and Stephen, sullenly began to give ground.

The movement was very slow, and we had not made much progress when a young man rode into the courtyard, and was received with round after round of cheering.

He was dressed in civilian costume, but wore in addition a broad red sash and a red cockade in his hat.

Who or what he was I did not know, but he was plainly a person of importance amongst the rebels.

At sight of our companion his face expressed the broadest astonishment, and leaping to the ground he advanced quickly towards her.

Speaking in a soft, silky voice and using polished, well-turned phrases, he expressed his regret at the conduct of the Nationals, and offered to accompany her home.

"You will encounter neither danger nor insult while with me," he concluded smilingly.

The girl looked at him in genuine scorn.

"Your offer comes too late," she said coldly. "These two gentlemen and my servant Franz are ready to protect me from all the cut-throats in Vienna, either in or out of uniform."

The stranger's face turned white, but his eyes burned like fire, and I prepared for mischief.

He controlled his passion, however, bowed low, and made a sign to the Nationals, who stood back, leaving the way to the gates clear.

As for the girl, she took no further notice of him, but, still leaning on my arm, walked out haughtily.

Franz marched in front with his club, Stephen, who had replaced his pistols, followed, while we two brought up the rear.

It was difficult to carry on a conversation, owing to the shouting; and indeed it suited me well enough to walk in silence, and to glance from time to time at the face of my beautiful companion.

At last Franz stopped before a large house, and the fräulein, making a gracious inclination of the head, begged us to enter, that her mother might thank us for what we had done.

Stephen, who cared little for the society of ladies, would have declined the honour, but I did not give him the chance, thanking her myself for her courtesy.

So the three of us--the lady leading--passed over the threshold, and, traversing a wide hall, mounted a stately staircase, which led to a magnificent apartment, as sumptuously furnished as any I had seen in Paris.

Here we were left by our charming guide, who, however, shortly returned with an older lady, grave and ceremonious, but no doubt kindly at heart.

This was the Baroness von Arnstein, the mother of the proud yet dainty girl, whom she called Theresa, and the wife of an officer highly placed in the army commanded by Prince Windischgratz.

The baroness listened to her daughter's story, and at the end thanked us for having, as she was pleased to say, saved her child's life.

Having passed an hour very pleasantly, and promised to repeat our visit, we took our leave of the ladies, and once more found ourselves in the streets of the excited city.

It was late evening now, and rapidly growing dusk; but the people were still abroad, shouting, singing the French Marseillaise, and congratulating each other on the result of the day's doings.

Many, however, occupied the time in far different fashion. Some paid visits to the principal shops, especially to those containing food or weapons, which they promptly seized. Others, with an eye to the future, were erecting barricades or strengthening old ones, and trying to put the city in a state of defence.

"Imbeciles!" exclaimed Stephen angrily. "When Windischgratz arrives he will knock the place about their ears. I wonder what has become of Rakoczy."

"She has the most beautiful eyes," I murmured, pursuing my own train of thought, "and of the loveliest blue. And what remarkable bravery to be shown by a girl so young!"

"Remarkable folly," replied my brother, "if you are speaking of the Austrian maid; but enough of her. Let us think of Rakoczy. The poor fellow may be dead, or sorely needing our help."

"If so, he will take some finding. I haven't seen him since we left the bridge; but I don't think 'The Joyous' will come to any harm. Look at that red light in the sky! There is a big fire somewhere."

"It is at the arsenal, my brave Hungarians!" said a wild-looking fellow staggering along beneath a load of plunder. "The students are attacking the arsenal. Never fear, my boys! We'll soon give you your independence!"

This speech was particularly galling to Stephen, who moved on quickly, saying, "Come, George; it is likely we shall find Rakoczy there."

It was difficult to get near the arsenal, as the streets were crowded, and from some we had to turn back, owing to the erection of barricades.

We were hungry, too, having eaten nothing since the early morning; and seeing an open café, I persuaded Stephen to enter. The place was dirty, and the food not the best; but hunger is a good sauce, and we ate what was set before us without complaining.

From the talk of the men in the café we learned that the soldiers guarding the arsenal were making a stout fight against the students and National Guards, though, unless reinforcements arrived, they were certain to be overpowered by numbers.

"Well," said one fellow, chuckling, "we have our revolution at last. There's no drawing back for the faint-hearts now."

"Latour's death has let them in up to the neck," said another. "They'll find it mighty hard to pull out of that bog!"

"And a good job too!" replied the first speaker. "What's the use of making a revolution in kid gloves? Strike while the iron's hot is my motto. Why should we stop at Latour when there's bigger game to be found at Schönbrunn? Why not--"

Fortunately by this time we had finished our meal, and were moving to the door; so, linking my arm in Stephen's, I led him out hastily.

Though the government called him a Hungarian rebel, he had scanty sympathy with Austrian republicans, and I feared an explosion which would do little good.

Once outside the shop, we forgot the incident in looking at the sky, which, near the arsenal, had now become a deep-red colour, made more intensely vivid by the increasing darkness.

"The building's on fire!" I said. "The garrison will have to surrender."

"Unless the sparks fall on the powder-magazine, and then--"

"It will be farewell both to soldiers and students!"

A man whose face was blackened by powder, came up the street shouting, "The arsenal's captured! Cheers for the brave students!" and immediately the people set off running.

"Let us go too!" said Stephen. "It is possible we may find our friend;" and I, knowing how irresistibly a fight attracted "John the Joyous," willingly agreed.

CHAPTER III.

THE INSURRECTION IN FULL SWING.

For some time the flames from the burning building leaped high into the heavens, and, spreading out, lit an immense area by their glow; but gradually the vivid red grew paler, and we concluded that the insurgents, having captured the arsenal, were now trying to extinguish the fire.

A nearer view, however, made it plain that our informant had brought false news, as the garrison still maintained a fierce fight against the students and the National Guards. The scene was more striking even than that at the hôtel of the minister of war. The darkness of the night was illumined by the flames which continually burst forth from one part of the arsenal, while the flashes from hundreds of rifles showed that the roofs and windows of the adjoining houses were occupied by the insurgents.

"Not much chance for the garrison," I said. "All these houses command the arsenal."

Still the unequal contest continued; the soldiers stuck to their posts, and while some threw water on the flames, the others returned the fire of the rioters.

The sharp-shooters on the roofs and at the windows suffered little, but their allies in the street, being more exposed, by no means escaped lightly.

All through the night the struggle lasted, but between five and six o'clock in the morning it became plain to every one that the powder-magazine was in imminent danger of being blown up.

Then the brave garrison agreed to an honourable capitulation; and as they marched out, the people, with savage cries of triumph, flung themselves into the building.

The students and many of the National Guards did their utmost to save the magazine; of the others, some sought for weapons, while the remainder appeared bent solely upon destruction.

After a tremendous amount of work, the fire was got under, but really I expected to see it break out again in a dozen different places.

The more foolish of the rioters played the strangest antics, and having obtained both rifles and ammunition, found pleasure in firing them at anybody or anything.

All the treasures were brought into the streets, and the swords of the great Scanderbeg and Prince Eugene became the property of men of the lowest classes.

We saw, without being able to prevent it, the helmet of that Francis the First who was taken prisoner at the battle of Pavia, tossed from one to the other of the ignorant mob, and watched the destruction of the armour once worn by the mighty Wallenstein and the faithful Daun.

We could not find Rakoczy; so, after searching a long while, we decided on returning to our lodging.

The streets were less crowded now than they had been during the last twenty-four hours. Numbers of people, tired by the fighting and excitement, had gone to rest; others, shocked by the excesses committed, had withdrawn; and indeed the broadening daylight made every one look more or less ashamed of the night's events.

From the talk of the rioters we learned that the emperor had left Schönbrunn with his family for Olmutz, and that Count Auersperg had sent four thousand troops to form an escort. The rest of the army had been stationed in the gardens of the Schwartzenberg and Belvidere palaces on heights commanding the city.

But for the order to cease firing, these same soldiers would most likely have nipped the insurrection in the bud.

Still we did not meet Rakoczy; but a scrap of paper pushed beneath the door of our room relieved our anxiety concerning him.

"8 a.m.--Call again later. Don't leave before seeing me.--J.R."

"Now we can go to bed with easy minds," I said, passing the paper to Stephen.

We were both exceedingly tired, and having once fallen asleep, knew nothing further till awakened by a loud knocking.

"Rakoczy," murmured Stephen lazily. "Let him in, George. There's no more rest for us."

"The Joyous" now began to troll forth a Magyar hunting-song, and the sound of the rich, full notes put all sleep to flight. Dressing hastily, I went into the sitting-room and opened the door.

Street fighting and loss of sleep appeared to have little effect on our companion. His handsome face was bright and cheerful as usual, and bidding me finish my toilet, he continued his song.

"So the insurgents carried out their threat?" I said, when, some time later, the three of us sat down to dinner.

Rakoczy nodded.

"Heard the news at the arsenal?" he asked. "What a rush it was! The crowd swept me away like a chip in the Danube. And as to getting back; there wasn't the slightest chance."

"We were separated too," said Stephen, "but met again in front of the hôtel. George had quite an adventure. Rescued a royalist maiden from the mob; quite like a hero of romance."

"A charming girl--the daughter of Baron von Arnstein. But Stephen has left out his share of the business;" and I straightway related all that had happened.

"Fortunate youngsters," said Rakoczy. "And a plucky girl. We shall soon be looking for an Austro-Hungarian alliance. I have some news, too, though not as pleasant as yours. Count Beula is in the city."

"What of that?" asked Stephen coldly.

"A great deal. He is the head of the Hungarian Committee formed to aid the Viennese in their insurrection."

"The work ought to suit him," I said carelessly.

"So it will till the Austrians recapture the town; then he'll change sides fast enough."

"Very likely," said Rakoczy. "But that isn't the point. At present the rebels are victorious, and Count Beula is a man of importance."

"Well, it has nothing to do with us," observed Stephen rather crossly.

"Wrong again, my boy. By virtue of his office, he orders you to appear before the committee this very evening;" and the speaker took a printed paper from his pocket.

Stephen tore the document in halves, and threw the pieces on the floor.

"I won't go!" he exclaimed haughtily.

"Yes, you will."

My brother sprang to his feet. His face was crimson, and he angrily demanded what Rakoczy meant.

"Don't lose your temper. The explanation's simple. Unless you attend, the committee will brand you either coward or traitor."

"Rakoczy is right, Stephen. My advice is to go and hear what the count has to say."

Stephen examined his pistols and reached down his sword.

"Very well," he answered grimly; "but I'm afraid the meeting won't be any the pleasanter for my company. When do we start?"

"The Joyous" laughed genially.

"Not for a couple of hours yet; but if you're tired of the house we can take a stroll through the town."

Stephen and I considered this a good suggestion, so, having locked the door, we went out on a tour of inspection.

By this time there was no mistaking the fact that the city proper was completely in the hands of the insurgents. The tricolour floated over the principal buildings; the National Guards patrolled the streets, and directed the operations of the people who worked feverishly at the strengthening of the barricades; the gates were guarded by armed students enrolled as soldiers. Of the imperial government not a trace seemed to be left.

Turning back from the Scotch Gate, Rakoczy led us through several streets, and finally stopped before a house which, outwardly at least, differed in no wise from its neighbours.

Our guide, speaking a word to the doorkeeper, led the way into an ordinary passage, at the farther end of which a second janitor directed us to a large room.

Several men had already assembled, and others came afterwards, bringing up the number to perhaps twenty.

They sat in rows facing a raised desk, and we, being of modest dispositions, took our seats right at the back.

"How long before the mummery begins?" asked Stephen.

"Don't know. Never was here before. Expect they're waiting for the count. Choice company some of these gentlemen, eh?"

"Half of them, at least, are not Hungarians," I said.

"Friends of Hungary, my boy. A few Magyars like Beula, half a dozen Poles, several Italians from the Austrian provinces, a German or two from Munich, and a red republican from Paris. Here comes the count;" and a hum of applause greeted the president as he took his place at the desk.

He was a man about Rakoczy's age, a true Magyar in appearance, richly dressed, and exhibiting an air of easy self-assurance which suited him well.

As soon as the applause subsided, he rose and began in German to congratulate his associates on the triumph of the revolution. The emperor, he said, was a fugitive, the empire destroyed; henceforth the Austrians were a free people, and the brave Hungarians would hold out to them the right hand of brotherhood.

This statement produced frantic cheering, and the president had some difficulty in restoring quiet.

Much yet remained to be done, he continued; but before opening the regular business he had a pleasing duty to perform, to welcome to that meeting, in the name of the committee, three Hungarians, the possessors of glorious names--names that would endure while Hungary remained a nation.

This harangue had exhausted Stephen's patience, and when the speaker went on to glorify the actions of bygone Rakoczys and Botskays, he sprang to his feet.

"Now for a thunder-clap!" exclaimed my companion.

Unlike the president, Stephen spoke in the Hungarian tongue, which prevented the majority of his hearers from understanding a word he said.

The others, however, did not miss a syllable, as their angry faces showed, and the hand of more than one man played ominously with his weapons. But Stephen, in his passion, heeded nothing.

"I am a Hungarian, but not an assassin!" he cried boldly. "We will fight the Austrians on the field of battle as long as any of you; but we won't help to slaughter defenceless old men, nor butcher brave soldiers on the altar of God. Magyars, I am ashamed of you! Has the ancient spirit descended so low as to find cause for satisfaction in a brutal murder? Let the Viennese fight out their own quarrel; Hungary is strong enough to stand alone."

"My brother is right!" I cried, before the men could recover from their astonishment. "Only last evening I stood by the side of Count Latour when he was hacked to death by brutal savages who shouted, 'Long live Hungary!' Have we not been shamed enough by the riff-raff of our own people in Pesth? In the olden days we met our foes in the open. If we have not the courage to do so now, let us be quiet, and not try to screen ourselves behind a petty squabble in the Austrian capital."

"I," said Rakoczy, in his musical voice, "am a Magyar of the Magyars. I fight against Ferdinand the emperor, who takes from us our privileges; but Ferdinand the king is the lawful ruler of Hungary, and when he restores our rights I shall hold that man a traitor who raises his voice against him."

"Well spoken!" cried Stephen.--"And now, Count Beula, President of the Committee and slaughterer of old men, you know what at least three Hungarians think."

Before he had finished speaking, a dozen men placed themselves between

us and the door to bar our passage.

"Are we to be your next victims?" asked Stephen scornfully. "Well, every man to his trade."

Rakoczy had levelled his pistols, and I followed his example, though nearly a score against three made long odds. Fortunately the threatened struggle was prevented by Count Beula, who ordered his men to let us go.

"They will not escape their punishment," he said. "The nation shall judge them."

"As it shall judge you," I answered.

"Come," said Rakoczy, taking my arm; "let us leave before your brother starts on the war-path again."

"The next thing," I remarked, when we were again in the street, "is to get away from Vienna. It seems to me that we are in an awkward fix. The imperialists will probably kill us because we are Hungarians, and the insurgents because we are not."

"We can go to-morrow, unless the count has given orders to arrest us at the gates."

"Perhaps it will be better," exclaimed Stephen. "I am tired of Vienna."

"I hope the fräulein will not be hurt in the scuffle."

"Why not stay behind to protect her?" said Rakoczy in his laughing way, little dreaming that we should all three be compelled to remain.

Yet that is what happened, as the next morning the gates were zealously guarded, and we tried in vain to pass. It was rumoured that Jellachich, the Ban of Croatia, had arrived within a few hours' march of the town, and the insurgents were taking extraordinary precautions.

Guns were placed above the gates, and men stood near with lighted matches; National Guards patrolled everywhere; ten thousand men--students, Nationals, men in blouses, and coatless artisans with upturned shirt-sleeves--lined the ramparts; crowds thronged the steeples, gazing earnestly for the first signs of the savage Croats.

We spent the day in ineffectual efforts to leave the capital, and on trying again the next morning found we had lost the last chance.

Jellachich was actually in sight, and from the roofs of the lofty buildings we could see the varied uniforms of his motley army.

The red caps of the Illyrians, the grey blouses of the Seregranes, and the scarlet mantles of the Croats, formed a portion of the picture, while in the background could be distinguished the imperial uniform of the Austrian cavalry and artillery.

"No running away now," I said. "We must stay and see the end of it."

Rakoczy laughed. His main regret was that we had no part in the approach-

ing conflict.

"If the Viennese really hold out," Stephen said, "there will be plenty to be done in caring for the wounded, and we will help in that."

For the next three or four days the city was in a state of suppressed excitement. Of course the air was thick with rumours, mostly ridiculous, but eagerly believed by the credulous burghers. Meanwhile only one thing was certain--that Jellachich, changing his position, had joined Count Auersperg in the Belvidere Gardens.

"They'll wait for Prince Windischgratz, who can bring twenty thousand men from Bohemia," said Rakoczy, "and then good-bye to the insurrection."

Since the terrible evening when Latour lost his life, the insurgents had refrained from violence; and although many robberies were committed, the disorder was far less than we had expected.

Every day I walked past the residence of the Baroness von Arnstein, but all was quiet there, and once I met the ladies returning without escort from a visit to some friends.

The baroness greeted me kindly, but with a certain haughtiness which was entirely absent from the behaviour of her daughter, who showed frankly that she was pleased to see me.

"You have not paid us your promised visit yet," she said; "but perhaps you are too busy? No? Then we shall expect you to come with your brother."

Stephen did not greatly appreciate the honour, but he consented to go, and we passed several very pleasant evenings with the Austrian ladies.

Of Count Beula and his committee we saw nothing more--they were busy making speeches; but Rakoczy, in case of accidents, obtained from Messenhauser, the Viennese commander-in-chief, a document which gave us, as non-combatants, the right to assist the wounded.

A fortnight now passed without incident, except for the arrival of Joseph Bern, the famous Polish general, who instantly set about the work of defence.

"A marvellous man!" said Rakoczy one evening. "Over fifty years old, yet hot-headed as a boy. You should see him in a battle with the shells bursting and the bullets coming down like hail. He's a regular salamander, and the hotter the fire the better Bern is pleased."

"He certainly knows how to make the men work."

"Isn't there some gipsy prophecy concerning him?" asked Stephen.

"Yes, and Bern believes in the truth of it. An old woman told his fortune many years ago, and prophesied he would never come to any harm till 1850. His body is covered with scars, but Bern doesn't count these. The Poles are fanatical about him, and believe he can't be killed.

"If the Austrians catch him," said Stephen, "they will put it to the test by

means of a hempen rope."

"Rather a risky experiment, for Bern," replied our companion with a humorous twinkle.

That same night Prince Windischgratz arrived with a fresh army, twenty thousand strong; and, having joined his colleagues, he summoned the city to surrender.

The reply was a curt refusal, and the citizens prepared for the ordeal of battle.

Three more days passed quietly while the royalists placed their guns in position; then, at ten o'clock on the morning of October 28, 1848, the tocsin rang loudly, and the *générale* beat to arms. Instantly the citizens ran to their appointed places, and it must be admitted that very few showed traces of fear or cowardice. The men in blouses, accompanied by hundreds of women and girls, guarded the barricades; the students formed up on the ramparts, where all night they had lain by the long line of watch-fires; and the Nationals, rifle in hand, marched to their stations.

It was nearly noon when a signal-shot was fired from the Schwartzenberg heights, and immediately the bombardment began.

Shot and shell and flaming rockets came hissing and roaring into the city; but the civilian gunners stood to their pieces, and answered shot by shot, though without doing much damage to their opponents.

It was soon seen that the principal attack would be made by way of the Leopoldstadt and Landstrasse suburbs, to the former of which I hastened with my brother and Rakoczy.

The Croats and Chasseurs had already reached the Prater, from the houses and woods of which they poured a hot musketry fire upon the defenders of the first barricade. Men dropped fast, and we were soon busy carrying those who were seriously wounded into places of safety, where their hurts might be attended to by the surgeons.

[image]

"From the woods they poured a hot musketry fire upon the defenders." Page 54.]

The bullets fell thickly around us while we ran here and there with flasks of water to moisten the parched throats of the stricken men.

Some, alas! were dying, and for these we could do little but cheer their last moments; others, who possessed a chance of recovery, we raised in our arms and bore tenderly away.

We had just returned from one of these sad errands when Rakoczy, seeing a fallen body on the top of the barricade, immediately climbed up in order to examine it.

We paused in our work to watch the handsome, bright-eyed fellow as he stood there, quite cool, the target for hundreds of rifles.

The insurgents, understanding his action, cheered and cheered again as he bent over the motionless body; but his heroism was useless--the man was dead.

Rising slowly, the brave Rakoczy stood for a second, glancing toward the Prater, then returned to us untouched.

"Dead," he said briefly; "and the Austrians are preparing for a rush."

Stephen glanced at the handful of insurgents who still fought doggedly, but their time was almost come.

A savage cry heralded the onslaught of the Croats, those hardy fighters from the south; and five minutes later the defenders of the barricade were in full flight, leaving behind only their wounded and dead.

At first I thought of retreating also; but "The Joyous" was already giving aid to another sufferer, and the sight of his calm face brought me to my senses.

So we three stayed, doing what we could; and almost immediately the enemy were upon us, leaping, shouting, tiring, and cheering like a body of savages.

A wild-looking lot they were, having little uniform, save the famous red mantle which hung loosely over the shoulders, and was fastened round the throat with a small cord.

For the rest, speaking generally, their costume was a dark cap carelessly placed on the side of the head, rough brown jacket almost threadbare, drawers tied in at the knees, gaiters, and clumsy-looking sandals fastened with strips of leather. Most of them wore a gay-coloured sash, and all were armed with the weapons peculiar to their country.

Each man carried a stanitza or long gun, a long and ornamented pistol, a cartouch-box on his shoulder-belt, and, in a richly-embroidered sheath, a handjar, which is half yataghan and half carving-knife.

You may be sure I did not see all these things as the redoubtable warriors came swarming over the barricade, but later I had ample opportunity of studying the weapons of the Ban's soldiers.

After them marched a regiment of Austrian infantry, well disciplined and steady as a rock.

As the Croats went by, I expected every second to be shot through the head, or to feel one of the murderous handjars in my throat; but I continued my labour, at least with outward calm. Happily, the Viennese had left the adjoining houses empty, so there was nothing to hinder the imperialists from advancing, or to further excite their passions.

The Croats swept by like a furious whirlwind, the Austrians followed more steadily, and we were left to our self-imposed task.

When the enemy had disappeared, dozens of women and men not engaged in the fight came from their hiding-places, and we were surrounded by a band of willing helpers.

The dead we left where they had fallen, for time was precious; but the others were all removed into the houses, and made as comfortable as possible till the surgeons arrived.

We had just finished our work, and were resting a while, when the booming of cannon sounded not far off.

"They're taking the second barricade!" I exclaimed.

"It will cost them dear," said Rakoczy; "Bern is there!"

"Let us go and see," said Stephen; "we may be of use."

CHAPTER IV.

VIENNA IN FLAMES.

For the second time the Croats were about to hurl themselves against the barricade defended by the daring Pole. A cluster of bodies twenty yards in advance of it showed where the first rush had been stayed.

The black nozzles of several guns peeped from the huge pile, and the gunners stood ready with lighted matches.

Looking at Bern, I remembered Rakoczy's story, and really it appeared as if the man were bullet-proof. Others exposed themselves for a moment, and were shot down; he, holding a short riding-whip in his hand, stood with the most perfect *sang-froid* in the hottest of the fire, cheering, directing, encouraging, and was not hit once.

Had I not seen it with my own eyes, I should have doubted a narrator who told me the story, for the thing was almost incredible even to an eye-witness.

But the Croats were ready. The signal rang out; they went forward in loose formation, slowly at first, afterwards more quickly, a few dropping by the way. Then, with an appalling yell, they literally flew over the ground, brandishing their handjars.

Once at close quarters, the Viennese would go down before them like ripe corn beneath the sickle.

The Austrians in reserve cheered. Another minute and their allies would be swarming over the barricade, when suddenly, from the mouths of Bern's heavy guns, belched sheets of flame. There came a tremendous report; the barricade trembled; the whole scene was blotted out by a cloud of smoke, which drifted slowly away, and then the Croats were seen retiring sullenly.

Of all their number, one alone had reached the goal, and he was a prisoner.

The Viennese cheered like mad; Bern gave some orders to his artillerymen; the imperialists covered the retreat of their allies by a sharp musketry fire.

Then both sides paused--the insurgents smilingly secure in their stronghold, their opponents to get ready for a fresh attack. With many other non-combatants, we had climbed to the roof of a house, from which we obtained a splendid view.

"The Austrians are going to do the work," said Stephen, who had a strong prejudice against irregular troops.

"It's throwing life away," answered our companion; and even I, who knew much less of military matters than he did, felt that the drilled infantry had little chance of success.

However, they were forming steadily for the assault. The officers sprang to the front, holding their swords unsheathed, the drums beat the advance, and the regiment moved on with the regularity of clockwork.

They made a brilliant spectacle, those hardy veterans, with heads erect, and resolute, determined faces, marching to destruction like one vast machine.

Faster and faster their feet moved, faster and faster the drums beat, rataplan, rataplan, till the music got into their bodies, and with a "Vivat der Prinz!" they broke into a swift run. I looked at the Polish leader; he stood like some genius of the conflict, directing and even controlling the progress of the strife.

The infantry, although advancing so swiftly, never for an instant got out of hand. As one man fell, another filled the gap; and when we last saw them before the thick smoke shut out the view, they were in even lines, shoulder to shoulder, as if on parade.

Crash, crash, went the heavy guns, and the shot and shell ploughed through the solid ranks, making great gaps, as we well knew, though nothing was visible till the sulphur cloud lifted.

The attack, like the two preceding it, had failed miserably. Would they try again? It really seemed like it, though in the three assaults they had been punished fearfully.

"They may keep on like that all the afternoon," said Rakoczy, "but they won't take the barricade. These front attacks are useless. I wonder the Ban permits them. Oh, there's the reason! See!" and he pointed toward the barricade.

Everything there was in confusion. While most of the citizen fighters clung to their posts, many ran or tried to run away.

In vain the Polish general exposed himself with the utmost recklessness; the position was lost.

While one body of Croats, supported by the Austrian infantry, had been attacking in front, the remainder, led by Ban Jellachich, had fought their way through the suburb of Leopoldstadt, and clearing the Avenue of the Emperor Francis, had fallen upon the barricade in the rear.

"Forward, forward!" rang out the cry at our feet, and the whole force advanced at a run.

The Austrians charged with bayonets levelled; the Croats, discarding their stanitzas, gripped their handjars, and with loud shouts hurled themselves against the position.

Between these two forces the Viennese were crushed. The gunners stood bravely by their guns till they were cut down. Bern appeared to be tranquilly giving orders; half a hundred students, banding themselves into a solid body, fought doggedly; but from the moment Jellachich's troops arrived the issue was certain.

A great burst of cheering rose when the black and yellow standard of the Austrians and the red, white, and blue of the Croats fluttered side by side on the summit of the barricade.

The fight, in that place at least, was over; the citizens had disappeared. The imperialists embraced each other, shook one another by the hand, laughed and danced and waved their caps in the air, shouted for Jellachich and the emperor, and finally ran on to pursue their victorious career. Round the captured barricade the dead lay thick, and the wounded as usual moaned piteously for water.

We went amongst them, doing the little that was possible to ease their pain, and helping to remove some into safer quarters.

To add to the horror, one of the houses caught fire, and it was feared that the whole street would soon be ablaze.

Farther off we could hear the booming of the heavy guns, the sharp rattle of musketry, the shouts of the combatants, the cheers and counter-cheers which told us how the battle was going.

From time to time, too, people brought reports of the fight, and they all boded ill to the insurgents.

The railway station of Gloggnitz, the Hôtel des Invalides, the Veterinary School, were taken one after the other by the imperialists, who, when night fell, were practically masters of the suburbs of Leopoldstadt and Landstrasse.

And such a night as that twenty-eighth of October I had never beheld. The town was on fire in more than twenty different places. Half the houses of the two suburbs were riddled by shot and shell; the flames were consuming the other half.

Red tongues of fire leaped into the sky, forming a grand but terrible spectacle.

The homeless people stood in the streets, some hopelessly dazed and stupid, others fighting the flames as sturdily as they had fought the Austrians; while a few philosophers, who had nothing at stake, looked on calmly at the conflagration.

As for us, our time was fully occupied in removing the wounded from the burning or threatened buildings. Throughout the night we toiled, and it was pleasant to see the genial Rakoczy, with his bright, cheerful face, giving water here, binding up a wound there, or helping to carry a sick man to a safer shelter.

A few kind words, a cheery smile, a pressure of the hand, a look of sympathy, he distributed impartially; and men of various nationalities must have blessed the handsome Hungarian, who spent himself so freely in their service.

Several times we had to face the gravest dangers. Houses were burning, walls falling; but the helpless must be rescued, and Rakoczy, never blenching himself, inspired confidence in others.

Many pitiful little dramas took place in the streets, where women and children searched, often, alas! in vain, for the bodies of their loved ones.

Thus the night passed, and the return of day revealed the horrors of the scene more plainly still.

During the hours of darkness there had been something grand about the conflagration. The great red blotches lighting up the sky, the vivid tongues of fire leaping, as it seemed, sportively from point to point, darting here and there, now joining, now separating, throwing into bold relief some noble building which again was lost in the black smoke, bringing into view the varied uniforms of the victorious soldiery--all these things powerfully seized the imagination, crowding out the more prosaic horrors.

Daylight restored the true proportion of things, and it was indeed a sorrowful sight on which we gazed.

Charred and blackened walls met us at every turn; half-consumed houses, battered and ruined buildings, huge gaps in the streets where the fire-fiend had worked his will; and, worse than all, the white-faced, sad-eyed women and innocent children, bereaved alike of home and of the strong arms that had hitherto been their support.

Some, wringing their hands in despair, cried aloud the names of their lost ones; the majority, dazed by grief, sought silently and with an unremitting patience that touched the hearts of the beholders.

The fighting, as far as we could tell, had long since ceased, and was not renewed.

A rumour spread that the chiefs had sent to ask for a suspension of hostilities while they talked over the terms of surrender, and I thought they acted very

wisely.

"Bound to submit," said Rakoczy cheerfully, "they can't do anything else. A revolution seldom succeeds unless the army joins the people."

We spent the day amongst the wounded, and at night, a capitulation having been agreed on, helped to convey some of them into the city.

Then, quite worn out by thirty-six hours of continuous labour, we went to our lodgings, and after eating a little food, lay down to rest.

Rakoczy, who lived in another house, joined us the next morning at breakfast, and we sat for an hour talking over our plans.

Stephen was anxious to leave Vienna at the first opportunity, and as Rakoczy had finished his private business, it was arranged that we should do so.

"We will go and see the imperialists march in," remarked John; "afterwards it will be easy to slip away."

Accordingly we went out, and found the streets filled with excited people who were shouting tumultuously, "Long live the brave Hungarians!"

"What's the meaning of this craze?" Stephen asked, looking at us in surprise.

"Something up," said Rakoczy, "and something queer too. Let us follow the crowd; we shall soon learn."

"Strange there should be so few students and National Guards about," I remarked.

"They're on the ramparts and at the gates. They'll stay till the surrender is formally completed."

Several men in blouses heard the word "surrender," and immediately shouted, "No surrender! Down with the Hapsburg butchers! Long live the brave Hungarians!"

On all sides the cries were repeated, and we, more astonished than ever, ran on quickly.

The Place of St. Stephen's appeared to be the rendezvous, where a wildly-excited mob had gathered round the noble cathedral. A cheer rose from the surging mass as a young man, mounting above the heads of his fellows, read out the contents of a billet sent down from the summit of the tower by Messenhauser.

We were too far off to hear the exact words, but they were to the effect that the Austrians were being attacked.

The thoughts of every one immediately flew to the Hungarians, and shouts of "Long live Hungary!" once more rent the air. A light cloud of annoyance spread over Rakoczy's face.

"That's no soldier's doing," he said. "No one but an imbecile would pit our raw recruits against an army of veterans."

The Viennese thought differently; and when, two hours later, a second bulletin was issued, stating that the Hungarians were advancing, the citizens became

wild with joy.

The capitulation was forgotten; flags were waved, cannon discharged, and paeans of victory sung.

Stephen and I talked largely of Hungarian prowess, and of what our countrymen could do; Rakoczy smiled and said nothing, which showed his wisdom.

The fight had drawn nearer; the insurgents were cannonading the imperialists from the ramparts with their long-range guns; we stood in the Place of St. Stephen's, and gazed eagerly at the summit of the tower.

Suddenly a great stillness fell on the crowd. By what mysterious means the knowledge of the evil news spread from the mind of one man to another I cannot say, but certain it is the cheers and flag-waving stopped before the vast majority of the crowd even knew that Messenhauser had sent down his third note.

A yell of rage and disappointment greeted the reading of the message.

Rakoczy's good sense had proved superior to our boasting: the Hungarians were in full retreat.

The news produced a startling effect on the Viennese. Obedience to any power came to an end; the reign of disorder began.

Shops were looted and private residences sacked; furniture was thrown into the streets, and the owners were assaulted; the town went mad.

I thought of the Baroness von Arnstein and her pretty daughter; and Rakoczy, guessing at the cause of my gloomy face, proposed that we should go round to their house.

"Von Arnstein is known to be with the army," he said, "and it is just possible the worthy citizens may wreak their vengeance on his family."

We found the ladies at home, and very glad they were to see us.

In spite of her pride, the elder lady showed signs of fear--not so much, I think, on her own account as on her daughter's.

"This is terrible," she said, "and just as we hoped the mischief was at an end. Your countrymen have much to answer for, mein Herr."

"Nay," replied Stephen, to whom she spoke. "The Hungarians fight against men; they do not attack women and children."

"But," said the young girl, "the rebels acted very unfairly in firing on the soldiers this morning."

"And unwisely, too," answered Rakoczy. "They are in a worse position now than they were before. They are bound to capitulate within a few hours."

"Meanwhile," said I, blushing boyishly, "if agreeable to you, we propose to remain here till the danger is over."

The baroness thanked us warmly for what she was pleased to call our chivalrous conduct, while the fräulein's eyes spoke as eloquently as her mother's lips.

"My servants are well armed," the elder lady continued, "and Franz is a host

in himself, but we shall certainly feel more secure, knowing you are with us. Yet how strange it is that we should be relying on the services of three Hungarian gentlemen!"

"Really," exclaimed the fräulein with a merry laugh, "we ought rather to be afraid of you. But why do your people quarrel with us, and drive away our poor emperor?"

Rakoczy drew out a locket, which hung round his neck by a fine gold chain.

"Do you recognize that picture?" he asked, releasing the spring.

"Why, it is the emperor himself."

"It is also the King of Hungary, for whom thousands of Hungarians would lay down their lives."

The girl knitted her brows, as if trying to solve some knotty problem.

"I don't understand," she said. "You fight against the emperor, yet you profess great devotion to the King of Hungary, who is the same person."

"Yet it is very simple. The Magyar's first love is for his country, his second for the king. Now, as emperor, Ferdinand has taken away our rights, which we must have back. When we get them, no king will have more loyal subjects than Ferdinand."

"But I understood you were all republicans," said the baroness.

"We are royalists, madam," replied Stephen.

"Who will fight for a republic. That is what Kossuth wants. We know here what the pulling of the wires will lead to. If your countrymen succeed in this war, they will become the subjects, not of King Ferdinand, but of Dictator Kossuth."

"Listen!" I exclaimed. "The street is filled with people."

The windows in the lower part of the house were already secured by heavy wooden shutters, and now we heard Franz barring the door at the main entrance.

Rakoczy and Stephen ran to aid the servants in case of need, while I stayed with the ladies.

I suggested it would be well to draw the curtains, but the baroness would not consent, so we sat looking down into the street.

The people did not appear to have any wish to do harm. They passed along singing, and waving flags, and many were already out of sight when some one raised a cry of "Von Arnstein." At the sound of that name the others stopped, and quickly collecting in front of the house, began in loud tones to abuse the absent noble.

The baroness gave an expressive little shrug of the shoulders.

"What poltroons!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "If my husband were here they would run like a flock of frightened sheep."

With this remark I could scarcely agree; nevertheless I had sufficient wisdom to keep my doubts to myself.

I looked at the fräulein. Her face was pale, but she was perfectly cool and collected; as she said afterwards, a soldier's daughter must learn to face danger.

"It's only a street brawl," I said. "They will get tired soon and go away."

But it is always difficult to reckon on what a mob will do, and this was a case in point.

The words had hardly left my lips, when a man, wearied perhaps of shouting, varied his pastime by aiming a stroke at the door with a heavy hatchet.

The effect of that one blow was to change the character of the crowd entirely.

Hitherto it had been one of merely disorderly citizens, lawless and unruly, no doubt, but not bent on any definite mischief. The ringing of the axe against the door acted as a signal for the loosing of a flood of evil passions.

Every one struggled to get in a good blow, and instead of the harmless though bitter language of a few minutes previously, we heard the more alarming cry of, "Death to the aristocrats! Death to Von Arnstein!"

The baroness moved nearer to the window, and I placed myself in front of her, saying,--

"This is madness, madam!"

She asked me with haughty courtesy to stand aside, and I, fearful of the risk she was running, appealed to her daughter. Her answer was to place herself by her mother, who opened the window.

The battering at the door and windows stopped while the crowd looked up curiously.

In a clear, hard, but passionless voice the baroness said,--

"I am Von Arnstein's wife; this is his daughter. My servants are armed, my house is defended by friends. If you enter, it will be at your peril."

For answer, some one on the outskirts of the crowd fired a shot, which lodged in the window-frame, and I drew the ladies back.

"Foolhardiness is not bravery," I said brusquely, and shut the window.

Then the attack on the door recommenced, and we heard quite distinctly the thud, thud of the heavy weapons.

I went to the head of the stairs and looked down.

Franz stood by the door with his ponderous club in his hand; I pitied the man who should be first to enter.

The other servants were on the stairs, and by their looks I judged they would be of scanty service to their mistress.

My brother and Rakoczy, sword in one hand, pistol in the other, stood near Franz.

"The Joyous" caught sight of me, and laughed.

"A new way of entertaining guests," he said. "The Baroness von Arnstein will become famous for her receptions!"

"The door yields!" exclaimed Franz gravely. "See to the ladies, mein Herr;" and he took a firmer grip of his club.

I nodded and went back, though I would rather have remained; shortly afterwards a yell of delight from the crowd proclaimed that the door had fallen.

The baroness looked at her daughter, who smiled back in answer; neither appeared the least moved.

The fighting on the stairs had lasted ten seconds perhaps, when the servants came rushing into the room in a body. Their faces were white; their hands shook so that the pistols they carried pointed to twenty different places at once, and I thought it extremely likely that the rioters would be spared the trouble of killing us.

"Put those things down, you scoundrels!" I cried, feeling certain they would be more dangerous to us than to the enemy; and when it was done, I added, "Now, back to the staircase and fight for your mistress, or I will kill every man of you!"

"What cowards!" exclaimed the baroness scornfully. "They will do no good."

"They may form shields for braver men," said her daughter.

Meanwhile, the sounds of the fighting grew more acute, and, knowing how far outnumbered my companions were, I felt compelled to run to their aid.

The servants whom I had driven out were huddled together at the top of the stairs, doing nothing; but, half-way down, Stephen and his two companions were still making a great fight.

Uttering a cry of encouragement, I ran down, and, discharging my pistol into the thick of the crowd, drew my sword.

My brother had received a slight cut across the head; Rakoczy, as yet untouched, was smiling cheerfully, and by his marvellous skill of sword keeping back the most dangerous of the assailants.

Franz's right arm was hanging by his side useless; but he swung his club with the left, and smiled grimly when a man dropped.

The situation, however, grew desperate. Force of numbers compelled us to yield several steps; Stephen had again been hit, and Rakoczy was bleeding from a wound in the arm.

I would like to record how, in this last extremity, we alone, by the aid of our good swords, cleared the house of the rioters; but that would not be true, as we owed our safety to quite other means.

In the next chapter I will relate exactly what happened.

CHAPTER V.

ARRESTED.

We were, as I have mentioned, being pushed steadily back, and the mob had begun to cheer, when a disturbance arose near the doorway, and a man, elbowing his way to the front, demanded angrily that the conflict should cease.

At the sound of his voice many of the rioters fell back sullenly; and the rest, being thus deserted by their companions, were compelled to follow, though not without angry cries and mutterings.

The newcomer, taking his stand directly below us, faced the mob, and in a sensible speech urged them to withdraw. The man was evidently well known to his hearers, and it was plain that he possessed considerable influence.

At first they seemed half inclined to resent his interference, but by a skilful mixture of flattery and firmness he finally succeeded in getting them to disperse.

Then he turned to us with graceful courtesy, and I recognized the handsome young fellow who had so opportunely come to our assistance outside the hôtel of the minister of war.

However, before he had time to speak, we were joined by the ladies, who had watched the progress of the fight from the stair-head.

The young fellow removed his cap, and bowed deferentially, almost to the ground.

"I am happy," he began with a stammer, very different from his former fluent speech, "to be of service to the Baroness von Arnstein and her daughter."

The elder lady looked at him in scorn, and said coldly, "Your ragamuffins have much to answer for, Captain von Theyer."

"And as for the service," exclaimed Theresa, "but for these gallant gentlemen who have now twice defended me against my own countrymen, it would be far too late."

"Were you in your right place, you would be outside, not inside, the walls of Vienna," the baroness said with a marked sneer.

"I have done what I believed to be my duty," the young man replied humbly,

"and my influence has always been used on the side of mercy. This very night I am trying to arrange conditions for the entry of the emperor's troops."

"Conditions!" cried the baroness scornfully; "Windischgratz will make no terms with the rebels!"

"The night grows late," said Theresa, making him a mock curtsy, "and we have yet to repair the mischief done by your friends."

I was sorry to see the humiliation put upon this blue-eyed young fellow; and though it was no concern of mine, I felt relieved when, with a confused apology for the excesses committed by the rioters, he took his leave.

Besides, it was necessary to set Franz's arm, and Stephen also required attention, though happily he was not seriously hurt.

The servants, who during the fight had left us in the lurch, now came forward to help.

While one went to fetch a surgeon, others temporarily refixed the shattered door, and washed the blood-stains from the stairs.

Rakoczy bound the arm of the valiant Franz, who, after receiving the thanks and praises of the ladies, was taken to his room.

We persuaded Stephen to lie down on a couch, where the baroness herself washed his wounds, while Theresa prepared a cooling drink for him.

As soon as the surgeon had paid his visit, the ladies retired, and Rakoczy and I took it upon ourselves to watch through the remainder of the night.

We did not think it likely that the rioters would return; still it was possible, and we resolved upon leaving nothing to chance.

My brother, weakened by loss of blood, had fallen asleep; the servants, with the exception of two posted as guards over the broken door, had gone to bed; the house was quite still.

Rakoczy walked to and fro very softly, so as not to disturb Stephen, and I stood at one of the windows thinking of the yellow-haired fräulein and the dashing young leader of the insurgents.

The hours dragged by very slowly, but daylight came at last, and I immediately sent one of the servants into the streets for news.

He returned in about an hour, smiling and well pleased. The city was perfectly quiet, he said. There were no signs of fighting; the insurgents had once more submitted, and in a short time the National Guards were to give up their arms to the imperialists.

With this information we joined the ladies at breakfast, Stephen looking rather pale but not seriously ill, and the rest of us little the worse for the night's adventure.

Franz, too, was doing well, and the knowledge of the capitulation relieved the mind of our hostess from further fear.

We were still sitting at table talking over the events of the brief revolution, when the loud report of a cannon caused us to spring to our feet.

The baroness asked to have a window opened, and a white-faced servant obeyed with trembling fingers.

"Surely I hear the great bell of St. Stephen's?" exclaimed our hostess in astonishment.

"Yes, madam," said Rakoczy; "the tocsin is certainly sounding."

"The people have broken faith again," said she. "I wonder the prince stoops to treat with them."

"If you will permit me," said Rakoczy, "I will find out what is happening, and bring you a report. My friends will stay with you in case there should be danger."

This proposal was agreed to, and as soon as he had gone we moved to the back part of the building, from which the southern part of the city could be seen.

It was plain that the terrible struggle had recommenced. To the clanging of the great bell were added the sharp fire of musketry, the heavier booming of the cannon, and the shouts of the combatants.

Suddenly, from the direction of the imperial stables, came a flight of shells and a line of fiery rockets, which fell hissing and sputtering on the doomed houses.

It seemed as if the horrors of the twenty-eighth were to be repeated. The flames from the burning buildings illumined the sky in several different parts of the town, and we anxiously awaited the return of Rakoczy to learn the reason for these strange doings.

It was one o'clock when he came back, and by that time the firing had ceased.

"It is all over now," he said. "The imperialists are in possession of the gates, and are disarming the National Guard. This last fight was a mistake. The leaders gave no orders for it; but the people grew excited, said they were betrayed, and, rushing to St. Stephen's, sounded the tocsin. Of course that set all the hot heads in motion, and very soon they were at their posts on the barricades and the bastions. Windischgratz replied promptly, as you would observe, and the magistrates, hoping to stop such a senseless fight, took the keys of the city to him on the glacis. The troops are working hard to put out the fires, and I think the Viennese have seen the last of their insurrection."

"It will be rather awkward for the leaders," I remarked, thinking of the handsome young captain.

"They are like eels," said the baroness spitefully, "and will manage to wriggle out of it."

"If they are half as clever as Captain von Theyer, they will be in no danger," exclaimed Theresa. "He will persuade his judges that everything he has done has been for the emperor."

"A tongue of silver is a very good gift, sometimes," observed Rakoczy.

"I should think a steel blade would be of more importance to a soldier," retorted Stephen.

"It cannot do half as much mischief!" cried Theresa merrily. "But, are you going?" for my brother had risen.

"It is necessary," he answered, with the quiet, half-pathetic smile peculiar to him. "You do not need us longer; your friends are at hand. We, on the contrary, have to seek ours."

"Which means you are about to join the ranks of our enemies?"

"We are Hungarians, and should be disgraced if we stood idly by while our countrymen fought for liberty."

"I suppose you are right," said the baroness; "but it is a great pity. However, I hope the conflict will be short; and though I must wish for the success of my own side, I trust that God, who watches over each of us, will bring you safely through the fight."

"We shall never forget what you have done for us," said Theresa softly, and her proud eyes strongly suggested tears.

We wished them good-bye; and even when in the street I, for one, looked back to catch a last glimpse of the pretty fräulein as she waved her hand from the window in farewell.

"And now for Hungary!" cried "The Joyous," "though I fear we must travel afoot: horses are not to be had for love or money."

"We can walk," replied my brother. "I have had more than enough of Vienna."

"I believe George is sorry at leaving the pretty Austrian."

"And her mother," I added, trying to make a laugh of it.

At this "The Joyous" smiled, saying I was a hypocrite, and that it would be well to take me away with all speed.

The streets were filled with soldiers, both Croats and Austrians, so we felt little surprised at finding a party of the latter drawn up near the house in which we lodged.

There were two or three trifling articles belonging to us in our rooms; so, while Stephen settled accounts with the proprietor, Rakoczy and I ran upstairs. My brother shortly rejoined us, the things were packed in a small handbag, and we were ready to depart, when some one knocked at the door.

"Come in!" cried I briskly, and an officer in the Austrian service entered.

"I extremely regret my errand," said he pleasantly; "but duty is duty, and you must consider yourselves my prisoners. Feeling sure you would not care to make a scene, I have left my men in the street. You have simply to give your parole not to attempt an escape, and I shall not use force."

"Very kind of you!" exclaimed Rakoczy. "But isn't there some mistake?"

The officer took a paper from his pocket.

"Stephen and George Botskay and John Rakoczy," he said, and proceeded to read descriptions of our persons--accurate, indeed, but expressed in very flattering language.

"Come!" laughed "The Joyous;" "after that it will be uncivil to refuse our parole."

"And quite useless," I added in Hungarian. "If we escaped the officer, we could not leave the city."

"What do you say, Stephen?"

"Surrender is a poor way of beginning a fight."

"So it is!" laughed our companion; "but, as your brother remarked, we can't help ourselves. The question is, Shall we walk to prison as gentlemen, or be dragged there as criminals? So, by your leave, I'll take advantage, in all our names, of the offer we have received."

Our captor, who was certainly a very polished gentleman, did all he could to soften the blow.

Very few people noticed us as we walked towards the infantry barracks, where we were to be detained till further orders.

The officer did not know the reason of our arrest; but he assured us the victors were acting mercifully, and, unless our fault had been extremely grave, we need not fear.

At the barracks the soldiers offered us no indignities, which was in striking contrast with their treatment of some students brought in at the same time, whom they loaded with abuse and even struck.

They looked on these enthusiastic youths as the authors of all the mischief, and to a certain extent they were doubtless right.

Our prison was a small, square room with whitewashed walls, bare of furniture, but having benches round the sides.

"Well," said I in disgust, "what are we to do now?"

"Go to sleep, and dream we are in Pesth," replied Rakoczy, lying down on one of the benches.

Stephen paced backward and forward restlessly.

"I don't understand it at all," he observed. "Why have they arrested us? What can we be charged with?"

"Depends upon who our accusers are," answered Rakoczy. "It is plain that some kind friend has denounced us by name to the Austrian general."

At once I thought of Count Beula, but John shook his head.

"I think not. The count owes us a grudge, but he will pay his debt in Hungary, not here. My idea points to a different man altogether--a clever and unscrupulous fellow, who has no wish to see an Austro-Hungarian alliance."

He looked meaningly at Stephen, who nodded.

"Don't speak in riddles!" I exclaimed irritably. "Tell me in plain words what you think!"

He clapped me on the back, and after indulging in a little good-humoured chaff, explained that in his opinion we owed our arrest to Captain von Theyer.

"It's this way," he continued, laughing at my surprised looks. "There's no doubt that the captain cares a good deal for the pretty Theresa. It is equally certain that he has no friend in the baroness."

"Well?" I said.

"Don't be impatient. I'm coming to the point. Had this insurrection proved successful, Von Theyer would now be a very important person, and his influence worth securing, even by the powerful Baroness von Arnstein. Unluckily for him, it has fizzled out like a damp squib; so he has seized the first opportunity of making his peace with the victors."

"What has that to do with us?"

"Much. For one thing, he thus shows his zeal in the cause of the imperialists. In the second place, he would not be too pleased at finding how friendly we had become with the fräulein."

"Do you mean the fellow is jealous of us?" I said, blushing crimson.

"Of me," replied Rakoczy, curling his moustache and looking very grave.

I half suspected he was quizzing me, but could not feel quite certain, till I caught him winking at Stephen, when they both laughed.

"The jest won't prove quite so pleasant if we're locked up till the end of the war," I said; but of that Rakoczy had no fear.

However, we had spent several tedious days in our temporary prison, when one morning a party of soldiers came to escort us to the general, who was inspecting the barracks.

Prince Windischgratz, attended by several members of his staff, was in a room in the officers' quarters.

He was a noble-looking old man, dressed in full uniform, with his breast covered by medals and ribbons--mementoes of many hard-fought campaigns. His face was mild and humane, but the firm chin and the latent fire in his eyes showed that he could be severe when necessary.

Addressing us in a mild voice, he asked us how it happened that we were found in Vienna with arms in our hands.

Rakoczy was about to reply when Stephen forestalled him, which I regretted, as my brother was not remarkable for the calmness of his language.

"Before answering that question," he said hotly, "we have a right to know by whose authority three peaceable travellers have been arrested like criminals, and deprived of their liberty."

Several of the officers uttered angry exclamations, but the prince smiled

good-naturedly.

"There is some difference between peaceful travellers and armed rebels," said he; "and you are suspected of being the latter."

"It is false!" retorted my brother flatly.

"Appearances are against you. You were seen at the bridge of Tabor, and at least one of you is supposed to have joined in the disgraceful murder of the noble Count Latour."

"Hungarians are not assassins," said Stephen coldly.

"The friends of Count Lamberg speak differently," interrupted one of the officers with a bitter sneer.

"You are ungenerous, sir, to taunt the Hungarian nation with the crime of a handful of ragamuffins," I said.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the prince; "but that is not the point. Can you deny the charges made against you?"

Stephen glanced round him indifferently; he would not deign to answer, and I followed his example.

Rakoczy, however, still smiling and confident, spoke for all.

"You have asked a question, prince," he said, "and you shall have a reply, though it may not be to the liking of some of these gentlemen. We were all three present at the attack on the bridge, and when your general fell, I by main force prevented my friend Stephen Botskay from throwing himself single-handed against the rebels. As to the murder of Count Latour, George Botskay risked his life time and again to save him, not from Hungarians, but from Austrians. Do you see this wound?" and he bared his arm. "That was done by an Austrian pike. Would you know why that gallant lad's head is swathed in bandages? Ask your fellow-countrymen, prince. The answer will show you that not Hungary alone harbours assassins."

"Talk is cheap," sneered the officer who had spoken before. "Why, that very fellow was at the first barricade in the Prater!"

"Is that so?" asked the prince.

"Yes," said Rakoczy simply; "I was there."

"Which many a poor fellow had reason to be thankful for," I interrupted. "More than one man in your ranks to-day owes his life to John Rakoczy's bravery."

"At this rate, your highness, it will soon appear that the town was captured by these heroes," chuckled a grizzled veteran.

I concluded that the speaker was of high rank, as every one laughed at his remark, as if he had said something witty.

They were still enjoying the joke when the door opened and another officer entered the room.

He was a man past the prime of life, with grey hair and white moustaches,

but alert, strong, and vigorous. His sight was keen, his bearing martial, and the deep scars of two wounds long since healed bore witness to his courage as a soldier.

His entrance attracted notice, and the prince himself stepped forward to greet him.

The others withdrew a little way, leaving the two chiefs together, and they immediately began talking very earnestly. From time to time they both looked at us, and gradually a pleasant smile spread over the prince's face.

At length the conversation was finished, and the prince, turning to his staff, said,--

"Gentlemen, we owe these brave Hungarians an apology for our suspicions. Instead of aiding the rebels, they have acted in a very noble manner, and to them Baron von Arnstein is indebted for the lives of his wife and daughter.--Baron, these gentlemen are no longer our prisoners; I wish they could be counted amongst our friends."

"That would follow naturally," said Rakoczy, "if every Austrian were a Prince Windischgratz."

"I cannot accept the compliment; it would be unfair to my brave colleagues," the general replied. "However, I can thank you all three for your generous behaviour, which I do most heartily."

We replied in the same spirit, and, accompanied by Baron von Arnstein, left the room.

That nobleman could with difficulty restrain his emotion; he thanked us twenty times while crossing the barrack square, and urged us repeatedly to return home with him. I should have liked this famously; but Stephen was anxious to leave the city, and I did not wish to thwart him.

Accordingly, after our weapons were restored, it was agreed that the baron should conduct us through the Austrian lines. He had only heard of his daughter's rescue that morning, and, knowing there were three prisoners bearing the same names as those mentioned by his wife, had immediately hurried off to Prince Windischgratz.

"I do not ask where you are going," he said, as we passed through the city gate into the ruined suburb, "but I could wish that your steps pointed westward rather than to the east."

"Perhaps it will be as well not to tell you," replied Rakoczy with a smile; "but if ever you need a friend in the Hungarian army, let one of us know."

"It is a terrible business, but we at least must not quarrel. Still, I cannot understand why you and gallant lads like these should be so eager to fight for a republic. I should have thought you were royalists to the backbone."

"So we are," said Stephen promptly. "Royalists and loyalists too, if the em-

peror will but grant our rights."

"What do you think, then, would happen, if by any means the war should end in your favour?"

"We should force the emperor to restore our constitution, and then return to our allegiance."

"Shake hands all round," said Rakoczy genially.

The baron shook his head.

"Pardon me," he said; "but I am getting an old man, and years bring experience. You deceive yourselves, or rather, have had dust thrown in your eyes. Kossuth and his friends are not fighting for a restored constitution, but to make Hungary a republic. Victory on your side will mean an exchange of Ferdinand the king for Kossuth the dictator."

"Then," exclaimed Stephen sternly, "defeat will be more welcome than victory, for, if what you say be true, the land will swim in blood. Here are three royalists whose forefathers drew the sword for Maria Theresa, and there are scores of thousands like us."

"You will hear our armies join battle to the cry of 'Long live Hungary and King Ferdinand!'" said Rakoczy. "We don't want a republic."

This talk of the baron's, so like what we had before heard, set us thinking, and it was in rather a sad humour that we crossed the Austrian or rather imperialist camp.

The baron saw us in safety to the farthest outpost, where we stopped to wish him farewell.

"Good-bye," he said kindly. "I cannot pretend to hope your armies will prove successful, but from my heart I wish you personally good-luck in your venture. Our people will do you no harm, except to make prisoners of you; but mind the Croats--they are rather bloodthirsty, and not over well disciplined."

We thanked him for his advice, sent back a friendly message to his wife and daughter, and then set out on our journey.

"A fine fellow," remarked Rakoczy, throwing a glance back. "I hope we shall never meet him in a charge."

CHAPTER VI

HARD WORK AT PESTH.

"Rakoczy! Not dead? Where did you spring from? Vienna? Been helping the *prolétaires*? No? Then you must have been plotting treason with the imperialists. But come into my tent. Who are your companions? I can see they are true Magyars. Sons of the late General Botskay?--Welcome, my lads! Your name alone would draw a welcome from any Magyar in the country."

A tall man, plainly dressed in the uniform of a major of Honveds, having a strong, wiry, but spare frame, his hair cut quite close to his head, sharp eyes--their light half hidden behind spectacles--his face hard and weather-beaten, with a reddish undergrowth of beard; such in appearance was Arthur Görgei, who was to become, without exception, the most famous general in Hungary.

From Vienna we had journeyed to Presburg, and thence to Raab, following the Hungarians, who were moving back on Comorn, and overtaking them at Raab.

Rakoczy, who had known Görgei in private life, immediately inquired for the general, and we were conducted to him.

"Haven't any refreshments to offer you," he continued, when we were inside the tent; "but never mind--somebody has."

He went to the opening, and we heard him say,--

"Here, Sturitz! Borrow me a bottle of wine or two, and some glasses.--So, old fellow, you've been watching the fight? Didn't you long to join in? How did the good citizens like to see our retreat from Schwechat?"

"Not at all. They were dumfounded. They couldn't believe it possible that the Hungarians were running away."

The general clapped the speaker on the back, and laughed with the most frank good-humour.

"Run!" he exclaimed; "that word tells nothing! They rushed headlong over one another; they threw away what weapons they had and vanished. Moza was in chief command, and he sent me with a brigade to attack Schwechat. We were a mile and a half from our supports. Windischgratz sent his horse-artillery at us, and, heigh, presto! the brigade was gone. Out of nearly five thousand I saw only one man, and he was an old soldier on the sick list."

"But what did the other brigades do?"

Görgei pushed up his spectacles and looked at us with a twinkle.

"The other brigades? The supports?" he said. "Oh, they took to their heels before my fellows did; but they'll all make capital soldiers after a few months' drill. Here comes Sturitz with the wine, and we'll drink their healths."

"Capital chap, this Sturitz, to send borrowing," remarked Rakoczy, sipping his wine. "He brings good stuff."

"And, better still, forgets where it came from, so that he can never repay it. So, my lads, you've come to join the army? Well, there's one thing; your father's sons will never show the men how to run away."

"One moment, general," said Stephen. "Can you tell me what we're supposed to be fighting for?"

Görgei looked from my brother to Rakoczy, who said,--

"In truth, general, things seem a little bit mixed. Over in Vienna they talk as if we wanted to set up a republic."

"A republic?" cried Görgei. "What stuff! Haven't they read history? Don't they know that Hungary is royalist to the core? Why, if the king came to this camp, the men would carry him shoulder high from one end of it to the other. Why, at Schwechat they ran away to the cry of 'Long live King Ferdinand!'"

"That ought to be proof enough," replied Rakoczy, laughing, "and I'm glad to hear it; because, like these lads, I've no idea of spilling my blood in order to make Kossuth dictator."

"You're going to fight, my dear fellow, and not bother your head about politics. First, though, there's a lot of work to be done. We want ammunition and stores of all sorts, and, as much as anything, we want soldiers; we've plenty of men."

"You aren't going to turn me into a drill-sergeant?"

"I am though. 'Right! Left! Keep your heads up there! Close up on the right!' That will be your work for the next week or two, while I dodge about here, and make Windischgratz believe we're burning to fight."

"Where am I to go?"

"Pesth, with the rank of major. Tedious work you'll find it, and no glory either; but you'll do more good there than marching and counter-marching with me. Now, as to these lads. Which is it to be--a showy uniform or downright hard grinding?"

"Take them on your staff," suggested Rakoczy. "They'll get both then."

"Haven't room for more than one."

"Let that be Stephen," I exclaimed promptly.

"Take George. He is the better horseman," said my brother.

"Toss for it!" cried the general, taking a coin from his pocket; "but don't stick to this bit of silver. I keep it as a curiosity; it's almost the only one in the country."

The spin of the coin decided in favour of Stephen, and it was accordingly settled that he should remain with the army, while I went to Pesth as a lieutenant of Honveds.

We had drunk another glass of wine to the success of the coming campaign; and Görgei, having made out the necessary papers, gave Sturitz orders to furnish us with horses.

Then, with kindly thought, the general took Rakoczy outside, leaving me to wish my brother farewell.

It was the first time in our lives we had been called on to separate, and the

parting was a sad one to both of us; but we made a fine show of good spirits, and talked confidently of seeing each other again in a few weeks.

"There's Sturitz with the animals," said Stephen, as the clatter of horses' hoofs sounded outside the tent. "Well, good-bye, dear old fellow."

"Don't be too venturesome," I replied, and returning the pressure of his hand, followed him to where the general stood with Rakoczy.

"Here you are, George," cried the latter gaily. "Thanks to the chief, we start the war on horseback, however we may finish."

"Remember," said the general, "drill, drill, drill, and plenty of rifle practice."

"We'll bear it in mind, general, and teach the fellows how to hit a windmill at least.--Now, George, up you get," and he swung himself into his own saddle with the ease of a practised rider.

Glancing back, I saw Stephen waving his cap, and Görgei with his hands behind his back and his head bent forward, already plunged in deep thought.

The weather was bitterly cold, and the roads were abominable; but we rode thoroughbred Magyar horses, which carried us at a rattling pace.

I was, in truth, rather miserable at leaving my brother; but the crisp, keen air, the sharp gallop, and the merry spirits of my companion soon chased away my melancholy.

"Wonderful man, Görgei," he said, when the horses, having settled down to a slower pace, made talking possible. "Kossuth did one good thing in giving him a high command. Hard as iron, and a born soldier."

"Has he ever seen service?"

"Only for a short time as a lieutenant in the bodyguard. But he has a spirit which nothing can break, an energy that never tires; and he can endure as much fatigue as any man in the country. I knew him and his brothers when they were youngsters; in fact, we were boys together. They were in good circumstances, but their mother brought them up to live hard. They learned early to take the rough with the smooth, and to laugh at hardships. They never felt the cold in the bitterest winter, and when the rain soaked them through, why, they just got dry again."

"Where are the others?"

"Don't know; but wherever the hardest work's to be done, you may be sure. Stephen will find his job tougher than ours."

"It will please him the more. By the way, I wonder if Count Beula escaped from Vienna?"

"Most likely. Bern did. Görgei told me they smuggled the Pole out, shut up in a coffin. That's how the story runs, whether true or not; but, at any rate, Bern's in Transylvania with 25,000 good fighting men."

"It's very good of the Poles to help us, but I'd rather see a Hungarian army

led by a Magyar chief."

"So would I. Still, we ought not to grumble with the bridge that carries us over the stream."

Sound advice, no doubt, though it scarcely satisfied me, and I was to think a good deal more about it before the campaign finished.

The journey to Pesth passed without incident, as we were amidst friends; and the morning after our arrival in the city we began our new duties.

As the general had stated, there were numbers of men willing and eager to join the army, but they were without weapons, except hay-forks and such like implements, and had not the faintest notion of military drill.

However, they were enthusiastic, and if not patient, at least tractable; so their instructors hoped to make something of them before long.

The drill-ground was the great plain or field of Rakos, behind the city, which in olden days was the meeting-place of the Diet, when our Magyar forefathers, attended by their vassals, assembled to discuss the affairs of the nation.

Once again the place was filled with men who had come together in thousands--ploughmen, carters, shepherds, miners--not to talk, but to learn how to fight the enemies of their country.

To a military veteran the spectacle must have afforded ample food for fun and amusement. Rakoczy laughed without stint.

Thousands of men, grouped in small detachments, were going through the elementary steps--men drawn from all parts of the kingdom, and dressed in every conceivable style, but for the most part true Magyars.

Here a peasant, in loose black linen shirt, black trousers, embroidered waistcoat, and gay-coloured jacket, wearing gaiter boots and a large-brimmed Spanish-looking hat, jostled a neighbour in a sheepskin coat, with a hat made of rushes, and huge sandals on his feet.

Here one saw a group of hardy fellows arrayed in embroidered petticoats and kalpags--the national caps, made of fur and adorned with feathers; there, men from the south with broad felt hats, leather girdles, gatya or full white linen trousers, and shirts that scarcely reached to the waist.

In one respect, however, they were all alike--they were dreadfully in earnest and bent on learning their new trade.

It was early morning when we went out to the Rakos; the sun had set when we returned to the city.

All day long we had been hard at work drilling one squad after another, till our limbs ached and our throats were parched as the crater of a volcano.

Rakoczy soon threw off the feeling of fatigue, and after dinner strolled with others of the officers into the town; but I was thoroughly tired, and slipped off to bed.

Certainly Görgei spoke truth when he described the work as tedious and without glory; but it had to be done nevertheless, and for several weeks the unceasing toil continued.

There was little variety in our lives just at that time. We went out in the morning, drilled the recruits all day, and returned at night tired as dogs.

Early in December we learned that the emperor had abdicated in favour of the young archduke, Francis Joseph, that Prince Windischgratz was almost ready to march, and that Jellachich had already started.

Though hearing nothing of Stephen, I did not feel uneasy, as thus far Görgei had only made a show of fighting to delay the enemy's advance while we were shaping an army.

From the second week in December every day brought a rumour of some sort, which we had more leisure to talk over, as the darkness made late drill impossible.

Rakoczy and I spent Christmas Day in marching with a batch of passed recruits to a small village situated several miles from the city, where a body of troops had been stationed.

The weather was simply detestable. First it rained in torrents, then it snowed, and the snow froze before reaching the ground, and, but for the bundas or overmantles in which we were wrapped, we should have perished on the march.

To add to the charm of the situation, the guide mistook the route, and we wandered about for several hours, stiff with cold and hollow from hunger.

When we did reach the village, the welcome from the troops made us forget the discomforts of the journey; and as our duties ended in handing over the fresh soldiers to the commandant, we spent the evening very agreeably with the officers.

The next morning, before starting for Pesth, we learned that Görgei, having abandoned Raab, was falling back on the capital, and that General Perczel was being hard pressed by the Croats under Jellachich.

Two or three days later the news came of Perczel's defeat at Moor, and a message from Comorn announced that Windischgratz had summoned the fortress.

Görgei was now manoeuvring to join the remnants of Perczel's army, in which he afterwards succeeded; but the news of these disasters caused great consternation in Pesth, and the members of the Diet determined to remove the seat of government to Debreczin.

On the last day of the year 1848, crowds of old men, women, and children left the city, and my heart ached, as I watched them toil painfully onwards, to think of the terrible march that lay before them.

However, as the man in Vienna had said, rose-water and kid gloves go ill with revolutions; but I wished it was possible to lift the burden from the shoulders of those so ill fitted to bear it.

That same night a grand reception was held in the palace of Count Szondi, and as invitations had been sent to all the officers still in the city, Rakoczy and I went.

I have often thought since of that magnificent spectacle. The brilliant uniforms of the soldiers, the sparkling eyes of the beautiful Magyar ladies, who were all dressed in the national costume, the ruby velvet dolmans of the wealthy citizens, the gorgeous dresses of the nobles, the brilliant lights from burnished chandeliers, the handsome furniture, the rugs of ermine and sable, the masterpieces of famous Hungarian artists hanging on the walls in heavily-gilded frames, the incessant sparkle and play of diamonds as the guests glided hither and thither, presented a scene that one does not easily forget.

Hitherto my time had been so fully occupied that I had not been able to seek out old friends, and now most of them had departed; but here and there I saw a familiar face and heard a voice that recalled to me the joys of bygone days.

Chief amongst the guests, and surrounded by a group of distinguished men and beautiful women, stood a remarkably handsome man, above the average height, straight, and of a fine athletic build.

His black, curly hair hung over his shoulders, his well-trimmed beard covered his breast. The manly expression of his face and the fiery glow in his eyes formed a true index to his bold, headstrong, and enthusiastic nature. He looked fit to be, as he was, the leader of the Magyar nobles who had taken up arms against the Austrian oppression.

This was Count Louis Batthiany before the evil days, alas! so soon to come, fell upon him.

Towards midnight there arose a great stir in the crowded assembly, a movement of feet, a craning of necks, a low hum which quickly swelled in volume; and turning round I saw that another distinguished visitor had entered the room.

Watching his almost royal progress through the brilliant throng, I thought of the words spoken by Baron von Arnstein, and looked on coldly.

But though, unlike the majority of my fellow-countrymen, I had early been prejudiced against Louis Kossuth, I have no wish to deny his marvellous and almost superhuman gifts.

A true Hungarian, he loved his country with fond affection; but his views were not mine, and even in those days I thought him wrong.

A man of medium height and wiry frame, he passed through the crowded room with dignified carriage and grace of movement. The paleness of his oval face was very striking, and his high, open forehead betokened keen intelligence. His

eyes were blue, and though naturally dreamy, they often flashed fire; his eyebrows were dark and thick; and over his chestnut hair he wore a wig. He had a small, well-formed mouth, fine teeth, firm, round chin, and delicate white hands with tapering fingers like those of an artist.

He wore a plain Honved uniform, over which was thrown a grey mantle.

The count stepped forward to meet him, and the two talked together earnestly, but in low tones.

"Kossuth is a great man!" exclaimed a portly civilian standing near us.

"True, friend!" replied Rakoczy, with his ever-ready smile, "but Hungary has no lack of great men; they grow as thick as robinias in the gardens."

"Kossuth is a splendid talker."

"Right again, friend," said my companion dryly. "His eloquence has created the raw material which Görgei will fashion into an army. Some talk, some fight; let each man stick to his trade."

"I hope," said the citizen mildly, after a glance at our Honved uniforms, "that Görgei will be able to make something of you."

Rakoczy laughed so heartily that several people turned to discover the reason of his mirth, and we thought it best to move away from the mild-mannered but caustic civilian.

Soon after this Kossuth left, taking Batthiany with him, and the rest of us moved into the large banqueting-hall, where refreshments had been laid.

At the last stroke of midnight Count Szondi rose, and a great hush fell on the brilliant assembly as the old noble with his venerable white locks faced us.

"Magyars!" he said, and the veteran's voice was firm and clear as a bell, "the year is dead; we do not mourn it. The new year is born, and with it a glorious future for Hungary. The Magyar is in arms; let those beware who seek to thwart him. Magyars, let us drink to the prosperity of the sacred fatherland."

The words were few and simple--the speaker was no orator; yet, as he raised the brimming glass to his lips, a fit of wild enthusiasm seized every man and woman in that spacious hall.

The men cheered again and again till their voices were hoarse; the women joined in the plaudits, their eyes sparkling, their cheeks aflame with excitement. Handkerchiefs fluttered and ribbons waved in the air; the scene became indescribable.

An officer said something, I know not what, but the next moment Rakoczy was at the farther end of the room, mounted on a chair.

The sight of his handsome face arrested attention; the hubbub gradually died away. Profound silence followed. The people, thinking he was about to speak, listened eagerly.

I have mentioned that Rakoczy had a magnificent voice, but until that night

I had not even dreamed of its power.

The lights, the wine, the beautiful faces of the Magyar ladies, the martial aspect of the men, the stirring excitement of the time, the dangers surrounding our beloved country, the knowledge that thousands of our comrades were in arms against the foe, all helped to enhance the effect, but much was due to Rakoczy himself.

We stood, I repeat, motionless as statues, gazing at him, when suddenly there issued from his throat, echoing and re-echoing through the hall, the first notes of the National Hymn.

We held our breath; tears were in the eyes of some; half-choking sobs came from the throats of others; bosoms heaved and cheeks burned like fire; men, unable to restrain their emotions, clinched their hands till the finger nails dug into the palms.

Loud and clear the martial notes rang out. They spoke to our hearts; they called us to battle, to death if need be, in defence of our fatherland.

We hung upon them breathlessly. Our hands unconsciously gripped the hilts of our swords. The hot blood tore through our veins. We heard nothing, were conscious of nothing, but the glorious Magyar hymn whose notes throbbed in every fibre of our bodies.

The first verse was finished, and as Rakoczy began the second every voice joined in. The restrained excitement had burst its bonds like the Danube in flood. It could no longer be held back; it was bound to find a vent, and it found it in song.

I know little of music, but grander music was never heard than that in the banqueting-hall of Count Szondi when the year 1849 was born.

As the last notes died away, the cheering was frantically renewed. Women sobbed openly, and there were few men iron-nerved enough to hide their emotion.

Then, with a ringing "Elijen Szondi!" in honour of our host, we broke up and passed singly or in groups into the street.

The night was dark and dreary, snow lay thick on the ground, a storm of frozen sleet hurled itself into our faces, and the bitter cold made us shiver beneath our fur-lined mantles.

"A wonderful contrast this," I exclaimed, setting off with "The Joyous" and several other officers for the barracks.

"As great as that between Hungary united and Hungary divided against itself," replied one of them.

"Or as that between Batthiany and Kossuth," suggested Rakoczy, after which

we lapsed into silence.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS.

"George!"

I had not been in bed an hour, and it was quite dark, when Rakoczy's voice wakened me from a sound sleep.

"Turn out and dress quickly," he continued. "We are ordered to Waitzen; the men are under arms."

"All right," I replied sleepily, and tumbling out grazed my shins against an iron box.

"Drawn blood already?" Rakoczy queried with a laugh. "What a desperate fellow you are!" and as he went away I heard him still chuckling to himself.

After a vain attempt to dress in the dark, I procured a light, and having made a hasty toilet hastened to the officers' messroom.

Several men were already there, scalding their throats with boiling coffee, and eating the next two or three meals before starting--a very good plan, too, as experience soon taught us.

As Rakoczy rightly said, on a campaign there is nothing like being a day in advance of your proper meals. Passing me a cup of steaming coffee and pointing to the eatables, he exclaimed, "Fall to, Botskay. There's no ceremony this morning."

"Morning?" cried a youngster who, having burned his throat, was glad to give vent to his ill-humour. "You don't call this morning? Why, I hadn't got to sleep before they woke me up again. Why didn't they tell us before, and save us the trouble of tumbling in?"

"Don't know," replied Rakoczy innocently. "Ask some one else."

We were laughing at Rakoczy's pretended simplicity, when another man, coming in, said,--

"Jolly, this, isn't it? It's as black as pitch outside, and hailstones the size of walnuts are falling. Anybody know what it's all about?"

"Which? The hailstones or the blackness?" asked Rakoczy.

"This sudden turn-out. A pity we hadn't stayed at Szondi's a couple of hours

later."

"I heard a rumour that Görgei had sent a messenger to say he was retreating with the Austrians on his heels."

"He should imitate the horses and kick out behind."

"I expect he will show fight at Ofen."

"With a crowd of peasants? Not likely. His best plan is to fall back."

"What an oversight that the general didn't put us on his staff!" said Rakoczy. "We could have given him a lot of useful information."

"There's the bugle, gentlemen! Ach!" as some one opened the door; "what a blast!"

I wrapped my mantle round me closely, took another pull at the hot coffee, and went into the barrack-yard.

Two or three hundred men were drawn up in waiting. They were to convoy a huge store of food and ammunition to Waitzen.

Rather to my disgust, I found that Rakoczy and I were to look after the carts, and a wretched time of it we had.

For several hours we trudged along in the blackness of the night, while the hailstorm beat down upon us in fury.

The roads were execrable, and frequently we were compelled to stop while the teamsters got their animals out of the holes into which they stumbled.

This first spell of active service was hardly to my liking, and even upon reaching Waitzen things were very little better.

However, a merry heart is a golden cure for most ills, and it was not easy to be miserable where Rakoczy was.

He laughed at everything, found amusement in the storm, made light of the bitter cold, professed that half a dinner was better than a full one, and that he preferred to sleep on the floor, because there was no chance of falling out of bed.

After waiting two days at Waitzen we learned that Görgei, by a sharp manoeuvre, had joined hands with Perczel, and that the Austrians were marching into Pesth.

Many of us had wondered at being sent with stores to Waitzen, but now we began to understand something of our leader's foresight.

Leaving the main army to retreat behind the Theiss, Görgei, making a great show with his scanty numbers, turned north to join us, and this drew the bulk of the Austrians on his own track.

Amongst the first of the advance-guard to arrive at Waitzen was my brother Stephen; and though he had little leisure for conversation, the meeting did us both good.

He was looking a trifle thinner, but in good health, and related with much glee his experiences with the general. According to his account, he lived almost

entirely in the saddle, slept at odd times where he could, ate what he could pick up, and had not once taken off his clothes since we left him.

Of the general he spoke enthusiastically.

"Görgei never gets tired," he said. "He is made of iron, and can do without sleep. As to riding, I never saw any one like him. After a day's hard work he'll jump into the saddle and ride to the outposts at full gallop on a pitch-dark night and in the stormiest weather. At first I used to ache in every muscle, but I'm getting used to it. Now I'm off to Kremnitz."

For several days longer we remained at Waitzen picking up recruits from the north, and then moved on towards Kremnitz.

Rakoczy and I had been regularly appointed as major and lieutenant in the 9th Honved regiment, the men of which were well equipped and in fairly good spirits.

The recruits had brought our numbers up to about twenty thousand; and, leaving Kremnitz, we marched in a south-west direction to make Windischgratz believe we were striking at Vienna. In this we succeeded, and thus prevented the Austrian general from crushing our main army, then in full retreat to Debreczin, behind the Theiss.

Having accomplished his object, Görgei once more broke fresh ground, and led us into the mountains, in order to draw off a part of the Austrian force, and, by a round-about route, to rejoin the principal army.

I was certainly serving a rough apprenticeship to the trade of war.

The roads were covered with ice, the valleys were piled with snow through which we had to force a passage, sometimes being sunk in it almost to our armpits; and as we stumbled along, huge avalanches thundered down the rocky cliffs that on either side overhung our path.

The majority of the soldiers, having newly joined, lost their spirits, which made the officers' work much harder; but we kept them going somehow, and struggled up and through the narrow defiles with the Austrians in our rear, and, for aught we knew, in front as well.

At the beginning of the last week in January, the frost broke up quite suddenly, and the narrow valleys were flooded by water, which swept through the gorges, carrying with it great pieces of floating ice.

As our regiment led the way, we were the first to bear the brunt of this new danger.

"Steady, men!" cried Rakoczy. "Plant your feet firmly on the ground and lock arms, or you'll be carried away."

The men responded instantly, but for a long time they could make no headway against the torrent.

Again and again we led them forward, but each time it was only for a few

paces.

The noise of the rushing waters, the blows from detached pieces of ice, the difficulty of securing a foothold, told on the men's nerves, and kept them from fronting the danger.

The colonel stormed, Rakoczy begged and prayed, taunted them with cowardice, mocked at their fears, and called them frightened children--all in vain; forward they would not go.

The general himself tried, and failed to put heart into them. Then he whispered something to Stephen, who, with a smile, turned and disappeared.

Suddenly there came a shout from the rear, feeble at first, but rapidly increasing in volume.

"Push on! Quick! Quick! The Austrians are on us! The enemy! The enemy!"

The greater danger swallowed up the less. The very dullest recruit could understand what would happen if the Austrians attacked us in that horrible defile, and in a short time we were boldly striding through the torrent. Those who would have lagged behind were dragged on by their companions; and so, fighting, pushing, struggling, shouting, we won our way bit by bit till we had safely passed the most dangerous places.

However, the Austrians did not put in an appearance; and when I asked Rakoczy what had become of them, he laughed gaily.

"Gone back to where they came from, most likely!" he said.

"Where's that?"

"Görgei's brain."

"What? Was it simply a trick?"

"Ask Stephen when you get a chance; he ought to know."

"And I've been expecting every minute to see the blaze of their guns from the heights!"

"Wait till we get nearer the summit; that's where the real danger lies. The Austrian Schlick is coming down post-haste from Galicia, and he's a tough fighter."

Three days after this conversation the truth of these words was brought home to us in a very striking manner.

Görgei, who, as usual, was in advance, had sent forward his scouts. A few light guns, which by incredible labour had been dragged up the defiles, came next, and were followed by the 9th Honved regiment.

Several other regiments followed at intervals, while the others were ascending by different routes, keeping in touch, however, with the main body, and all converging on one pass, which it was hoped the Austrians had not seized.

Unfortunately, Schlick had been too quick for us, and the scouts returned with the information that the mouth of the pass was blocked by huge boulders, behind which a formidable body of troops with heavy guns was stationed.

The regiment halted; Görgei went to reconnoitre, and at once the artillery were ordered to advance, with the 9th in support. The men were weary and foot-sore, half-starved, numbed with cold, depressed by this everlasting retreat, and I doubted very much if they were equal to the work in front of them.

Suddenly the great guns thundered out, and our own replied; the unequal artillery duel had begun.

We moved up steadily, and the sharpshooters, running forward and getting whatever cover they could, picked off the Austrian gunners.

Our own artillerymen worked their pieces bravely, but were altogether overmatched.

The place must be taken by storm, and the assault fell to the share of the 9th.

I thought of the barricade in the Prater, and remembered how I had pitied the brave fellows who had thrown away their lives in the attempt to carry it.

Now I was in a similar position, and my heart beat quickly as I stood there waiting for the word of command.

The men, for the most part, looked downcast, as if they did not enjoy the prospect, and indeed it was a terrible trial for young troops.

Rakoczy's handsome face lit up with his usual smile as he nodded to me pleasantly.

At length the artillery fire on our side ceased, the word rang out, the regiment moved forward.

The order was that no man should stop to fire; but our fellows were not veterans, and it was disregarded.

Still, considering that hardly one of us had been under fire before, we did not do so badly.

Görgei gave us a cheer as we passed the staff; Stephen waved his hand to me, and we were gone.

Into the mouth of the pass we rushed, so close to the great boulders that we could distinctly see the muzzles of the black guns.

"Forward!" cried the colonel, waving his sword.

"Forward!" echoed Rakoczy, still smiling; and we ran with such speed that the first discharge checked only those who fell.

The second threw us into some disorder. The colonel was killed outright by a cannon-ball, but Rakoczy took command and led us on gallantly.

We had, however, lost many men; and when, for the third time, the iron balls tore through our ranks, the survivors would have no more of it.

Back they went helter-skelter, tumbling over one another in their eagerness to seek shelter, Rakoczy's orders being unheeded in the stampede.

The attack had hopelessly failed, and it was plain to all that the bravest

troops would only be thrown back crushed and bleeding from that lane of death.

The check was a serious one. To turn the position by another pass would cause a delay of several days, which might ruin the whole cause, for we did not know that Windischgratz was still in Pesth.

The artillery duel began again, while we re-formed our ranks and looked about us gloomily.

On our right and left huge precipices, covered with ice and snow, towered skyward.

If only it were practicable to scale them, we might yet drive the Austrians out.

I could not keep my eyes from the cliffs, nor dismiss the idea from my head.

Fifty good shots perched up there could pick off every artilleryman who stood by the enemy's guns.

There were numerous mountaineers in the regiment, and I myself had always been reckoned a good climber.

I had just escaped death; but unless some other plan was discovered, Görgei would fling us at that barrier until those who survived--if there were any--did get over. In fact, he could not help himself.

And if death came while I was scaling the cliff, why, the result was no worse than if it met me in the narrow path.

I went to Rakoczy and told him what was in my head.

Just for an instant he turned pale, and the smile left his face, but he soon recovered his composure.

"There are a hundred chances of death in fifty yards," he said, "and a thousand when the Austrians see the dodge."

"There are five thousand in front of us," I answered. "Still, that isn't the point. Will you give me an axe and leave to go?"

"I wouldn't order or even ask you to try; but if you're bent on it--"

"It may save hundreds of lives."

"Then I'll borrow you a hatchet, and call for volunteers."

He turned to the regiment. "I want twenty men fond of mountain-climbing to go on a little excursion with Lieutenant Botskay."

More than half the regiment stepped to the front, and, selecting a score, I told them what we were going to do.

The major sent for some hatchets, and then informed Görgei, who instantly dispatched a cloud of sharpshooters to distract the enemy's attention.

Unbuckling my sword, I gave it to Rakoczy, and, in case of accidents, wished him good-bye.

Stephen had been sent on an errand by the general, and I was rather pleased than otherwise by his absence; the knowledge that he was below, gazing up at me

and trembling for my safety, might have preyed on my nerve.

My twenty men--all muscular, wiry fellows--laid aside their rifles, and, axe in hand, stood ready to mount.

Fifty of the finest marksmen waited beneath the cliff, ready to follow in our track if we should find or cut a path, and to protect us from the enemy's fire.

Meanwhile, the sharpshooters at the front, snugly sheltered behind rocks and boulders, discharged their rifles incessantly, and, without doing much damage, kept the Austrians well employed.

Our starting-point was a ledge, to which we were hoisted on men's shoulders, and which was so narrow that we could barely preserve a footing.

A hum of sympathy rose from the ranks as I cut the first notch; but for the fear of attracting attention it would have been a roar of cheering.

Rakoczy had said truly there were a hundred chances of death in fifty yards. The cold was so intense that several times the hatchet was within an ace of slipping from my fingers; and once, while attempting to hang on by a jutting ledge, I must have rolled over but for the man behind me. The first part of the journey we did in single file, and of course each climber made the way easier for the next one, so that it became possible for Rakoczy to send on the soldiers with rifles.

Up in the pass our light guns had been partly silenced; but the sharpshooters were busy firing as fast as they could load, and so making the Austrians believe that another assault was to be delivered.

To this end, also, the 9th Honveds had been drawn up and placed in position, but out of the line of fire, as if they were only awaiting the support of the next regiment in order to charge.

We had reached an immense wall of ice, perpendicular, smooth, and of almost unbroken surface, and I was regarding it with dismay, when the man behind me exclaimed, "To the right, lieutenant! There seems to be a tiny path; we can creep round."

There was a tiny path indeed, so narrow that we had to press against the wall like flies, and I doubted the wisdom of attempting to pass.

"It will get wider, sir; and once round, the rest will be easy."

I gave one last thought to my friends and put my foot on the ledge.

In spite of the ice and snow and the bitter, freezing wind I was hot enough now--so hot that my body was bathed in perspiration.

Placing the fingers of my left hand in a small crevice, I cut a little nick farther on, and thus, step by step, made my perilous way.

Half-way across I was seized by a fit of terror, and clung to the wall helplessly like a frightened child, not daring to move, hardly, indeed, to breathe.

Something had unnerved me; I scarcely knew what. There had been a rasping of ice, a sound as of slipping feet, a groan of anguish promptly suppressed,

and I felt as if the angel of death had lightly brushed me with his spreading wings.

The sound of an unfamiliar voice brought me to my senses. A man was speaking, but it was not Szemere, the one who had up till now been my close attendant.

"Hold tight, sir. Szemere has gone over--missed his footing."

I shuddered to think of the poor fellow's awful fate, but, strangely enough, the knowledge of it restored my courage. I ceased to tremble, braced myself up, and cut another notch. Down below, the unequal fight was being waged in the pass. We could hear the roar of the heavy guns, the sharp, crisp rattle of the musketry, the shouts of the combatants, while we hung like a line of flies to the face of the cliffs.

At length, with every muscle strained, with aching limbs, with scratched face, and bleeding fingers, I cut the last notch, and stood in comparative safety.

The next man, a light, wiry fellow, he who had told me of Szemere's death, cut the notch deeper, and as he did so the axe slipped from his nerveless fingers and went clattering down the abyss.

The brown of his face turned to a greyish-white colour; his legs tottered; his teeth knocked together; his hold loosened; in another second he would be gone!

I never could clearly understand what happened then. I remember dimly that my arms were locked round the fellow's waist, that our bodies were swaying to and fro, that by force of instinct I used all my strength to swing backward.

In this I must have succeeded, for presently I found myself lying on the flat of my back, still hugging the soldier. A pull at my flask of silovitz set me right, and then I forced some of the liquor into the mouth of my companion. Directly the poor fellow recovered from his stupor he knelt and kissed my hands, saying gratefully,--

"My life is yours, sweet master. Mecsey Sándor is your servant for ever and ever."

We in Hungary adopt the plan of placing the surname first; English-speaking people would call the man Sándor or Alexander Mecsey.

Several of the others now joined us; and, as the dead Szemere had foretold, the most difficult part of the journey was past. We were no longer compelled to march in single file, but could spread out, and thus allow the riflemen to follow closely.

Now walking upright, now crawling on our hands and knees, we drew near to the Austrian position, when a volley from the enemy showed they had discovered us.

Bidding my men lie low, I drew a small flag from my pocket, and, standing proudly erect, waved the glorious red, white, and green colours to the breeze.

The men of the 9th greeted the flag with a tremendous shout, which went

echoing and re-echoing up the mountain sides. The Austrians fired fast and furiously, but in their excitement they aimed badly.

We with the axes, of course, could do nothing more, but the riflemen, taking shelter, poured in a terrible fire, against which the enemy were powerless.

The men at the guns went down one after another; and every minute our fire became more severe, as Rakoczy continued to feed us with fresh volunteers.

The Austrian chief made a gallant effort to reach us, and we saw his white-coated infantry helping each other to scale the smooth walls.

The attempt proved vain, as it was bound to do. The men slipped and scrambled, fell, and rolled to the bottom--many to lie there for all time.

Those who climbed highest were greeted by the bullets of my hidden marksmen; and though the white-coats advanced with their wonted bravery, they struggled and died in vain.

So plain was this that the leader, while still maintaining a brave show against Görgei, began to draw off his troops, and from our vantage-place we watched them sullenly retire.

Very slowly and steadily they went, while we, springing to our feet, cheered again and again.

Down below, our comrades secured the abandoned post, leaving the next regiment, which had suffered hardly at all, to pursue the enemy.

It was a trying task to descend, especially as we had several wounded men to carry, but the knowledge of victory cheered our spirits; and at length, with the loss of only two or three men, we reached the pass.

How our regiment cheered as we ranged ourselves to receive the general! He stood fronting us, his head bent forward, his hands behind his back as usual.

"Gallant lads, one and all," he said; "yours is to-day's victory."

We answered with an "Elijen Görgei!" and when he departed, the men of the regiment crowded round to congratulate their comrades.

As for me, the "Well done!" of Rakoczy, who was now colonel, and Stephen's warm embrace, were sufficient reward; but Görgei thought otherwise, and I, who had entered the pass as a simple lieutenant, left it as a captain.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DRAWN BATTLE.

The taking of the pass, described in the preceding chapter, was the first really stubborn affair we had been engaged in, but during the remainder of the journey the enemy attacked us many times.

Soldiers have told me that, from a military point of view, the march was a brilliant one, and that it stamped our leader as a most accomplished general.

To us it was exceedingly wearisome and distressing. We had very little food, and that the coarsest. Our boots were dropping to pieces, our uniforms were in rags and tatters. Often we forced a passage through ice and snow knee-deep. Frequently the fog enveloped us so thickly that a man could not see his neighbour, and that in a place where a false step meant death.

At night our bivouac was the snow-covered ground, where, wrapping ourselves in our bundas, we tried to forget our misery for an hour or two in sleep.

In addition, the Austrians gave us plenty of employment in the fighting line, especially near the summit, where they occupied the passes in force.

However, as Görgei had resolved to reach Kaschau, to Kaschau we had to go; and by dint of climbing and fighting we at length forced the mountain barriers, and began the descent of the valleys.

During the march I saw Stephen scarcely at all, but Rakoczy and I were constantly together; and my friend more than ever justified his old name of "The Joyous."

The hardships of the journey had no terrors for him. He appeared warm in the bitterest cold, and when every one else was soaked through, he, to judge by his smiling face, was dry and comfortable.

He joked with the men on their troubles till the poor fellows almost began to believe they were grumbling about nothing.

"Cold?" he would say. "Nonsense! Why, you're glowing as if you'd just come from a vapour-bath. Footsore? I wouldn't like to challenge you to a race for a hundred gulden. Andras, how pleased you'll be when the war's ended to say, 'I went over the mountains with Görgei.' Your neighbours will never let you pay for a bottle of silovitz all the rest of your life. 'The cosiest seat in the inn for Andras,' everybody will say. 'He is a warrior, if you like.' Why, the maidens won't dance with another man in the room while you're there. Look at Janko," as a burly fellow shot head foremost into a snowdrift. "I'll warrant he expects to find something good in there. Lucky fellow, Janko!"

Sometimes he would start one of the fiery, soul-stirring, popular songs, when the whole regiment, joining in and forgetting all else, would swing along quite cheerfully.

At night, while we lay on the snow-covered ground, our teeth chattering with the cold, he would amuse the officers by his glowing descriptions of the mountains in the summer-time.

"The noblest mountains in the world!" he would say with enthusiasm. "It is a treat to saunter through the miles of beautiful pine forests, or to gather the lovely gentians and forget-me-nots, blue as if they had dropped from heaven, or to linger by the edge of some boulder-wrapped lake, and gaze into its clear green waters. In the early morning, when myriads of dewdrops sparkle and flash like countless diamonds, and the sun paints the cliffs with warm gold and crimson and purple hues, the place is like paradise. Then to stand on the summits and gaze over the fruitful plains, yellow with ripening grain--ah, I tell you it is a treat to wander amongst the Carpathians!"

Then some one would point out in a jesting spirit further delights to be enjoyed--the splendid mists, which drenched us to the bone, and prevented us from seeing the frightful chasms, down which we might tumble; the bitter cold, but for which we should not appreciate the comfort of our bundas; the slippery ice, which provided us with endless fun and a cracked head occasionally.

Gradually we would drop off into a restless sleep, and in the morning pinch ourselves hard, to discover if our limbs still had any feeling.

The march towards Kaschau was marked by a series of desperate fights with the troops under the Austrian general Schlick.

Sometimes they took up a favourable position, which it cost the lives of many brave men to capture; sometimes, creeping quietly through the darkness, they made an attack just when, wearied out by the toils of the day, we had fallen asleep.

The last of these assaults was of a very determined nature, and for a time had every chance of succeeding.

We were within a day's march of Kaschau, and had covered many weary miles since the morning.

A thick fog had come up with the night--so thick, indeed, it was that it closed us in like a curtain.

Most of the men fell asleep directly they lay down, and very soon there was not a sound to be heard in the camp.

Towards midnight I was awakened by a wild shouting, and springing to my feet, found that the Austrians were in the midst of us.

The fight that ensued was of the weirdest kind. In the darkness friend could not be distinguished from foe, and many a man lost his life by sword or bayonet thrust without seeing the hand that struck the blow.

Rakoczy's voice kept his regiment well together, and owing chiefly to the steadiness of the 9th Honveds the Austrians were finally repulsed.

Like ghosts they had come, like ghosts they vanished; and but for the groans of the wounded, we might have regarded the whole affair as a bad dream.

However, for the officers, at least, there was no further rest; and though

the men went to sleep again, we were kept busy doubling the sentries, restoring order, and seeing after the poor fellows who had been hurt.

Very glad we were when morning came; and having eaten our breakfasts, which occupied little time, we set out for Kaschau.

I think Schlick's daring venture must have cost him dear; at any rate we saw no more of the enemy, and in the evening arrived, footsore and hungry, at Kaschau, where an army corps under General Klapka met us.

Rakoczy pointed out the general to me, and said that, next to Görgei, he was the finest soldier in the army.

In figure he was rather short, but exceedingly well shaped, and he had the oval face, black whiskers and moustache, and fiery, dark eyes of the true Magyar.

His features were refined, his manners those of a high-born gentleman, and his expression was so mild and gentle that in private dress he would hardly have been taken for a soldier.

Yet so brilliant was to be one, at least, of his exploits that his name will live for ever in the memories of his Magyar comrades.

At Kaschau we remained several days, both in order to recover from our fatigue and to obtain a fresh supply of ammunition, as the men had almost come to their last cartridge.

From Kaschau we proceeded to Mischkolz, where Dembinski joined us with another army; and here, to our disgust, we learned that the Polish leader had been made commander-in-chief.

"That's Kossuth's idea," said Rakoczy, "and very badly he'll find it work."

Stephen, who at last had found time to spare an hour with us, was very indignant.

"A Magyar army has no need of a Polish general," he exclaimed, "especially when it counts such men as Görgei and Klapka among its leaders."

"The Pole is a republican," I remarked, thinking of the talk at Vienna. "Görgei is a royalist."

"And his proclamation did him little good with the Kossuth party."

Rakoczy here referred to the address our general had published, in which he declared his army "would oppose itself to all those who may attempt by republican intrigues in the interior of the country to overthrow the constitutional monarchy."

"If Görgei held up his little finger, the army would sweep Kossuth and his Poles out of the country!" my brother cried warmly.

"But he won't, and I'm glad of it," said Rakoczy. "Let us settle with the Austrians first; 'twill be time enough then to fight one another. It's a good rule not to pick up more than you can hold."

What Görgei and Klapka thought of the matter I cannot say; but it took a good deal of enthusiasm out of the soldiers, who had learned to look on Görgei

as their natural chief.

However, as Rakoczy well said, the Austrians must be dealt with first; and as Windischgratz was advancing, we broke up our camp, and marched, forty thousand strong, with two hundred and twenty-five guns, to Kapolna, on the road between Pesth and Debreczin.

Here we occupied a strong position on the heights near the town, each wing resting on a ruined village, with our splendid artillery and several squadrons of veteran hussars in the centre.

Daylight had scarcely broken on the morning of the twenty-sixth of February, when the sounds of heavy firing announced that the battle had begun.

My regiment was stationed on the left, and at first I had ample leisure to view the struggle in the centre and on the right.

Compared with this tremendous fight, our encounters with Schlick in the mountains were little more than playing at war.

In the centre, forty great guns on either side, served by skilful gunners, thundered away at each other. Farther along, the Austrian leader hurled battalion after battalion against our right wing.

By means of a field-glass I saw what happened to the first, and the fate of several others was like it.

A great, white-coated mass, looking grey, however, in the early morning, went forward slowly, it appeared to me, yet firmly. A few figures in the front formed a sort of spear-head, which should help the mass to pierce a way.

These greyish-white dots were officers. One carried what might have been a handkerchief; really it was the famous black and yellow colours.

The mass moved on slowly, steadily, firmly. On the right of it shot and shell flew screaming and hissing; flashes of fire burst from the guns; the earth shook with the discharges; a curtain of smoke shut out my view.

When it lifted I looked for the battalion. Yes, there it was, compact as ever, undisturbed by the terrible fight going on elsewhere, and marching steadily towards its destination.

Suddenly some tiny curls of whitish smoke were wafted from the heights. The battalion halted. There was a movement in the ranks--I could not tell what; then the mass advanced again. But as it moved away, I noticed that some parts of it had, so to speak, dropped off; and from this point there began a confused line of dots, thin in some places, thicker in others.

The column had become smaller, and each time the little puffs of curly smoke appeared, it seemed to quiver, as if with cold, and the line of dots was made longer.

The spear-head had done its share towards forming the track. The sides and base of it had vanished, but the apex remained. It was the man with the handkerchief, which he continued to wave without once looking back.

I watched him with intense fascination, till once again a thick black cloud drifted across my lens.

When the battalion next came into sight, it was considerably smaller, and it had left a heap much higher than any of the others about thirty yards in the rear; but the one remaining point of the spear-head still waved its black and yellow folds to and fro.

Suddenly the movement of the mass increased in speed, but it was still one body, save for that detached point in the van.

To it something--I could only guess what--at last happened.

The flag disappeared, the greyish-white figure sank to the ground. I choked back a sigh of regret, when flag and figure came into sight again, only the former had changed its position from right to left.

Now, too, the white puffs came out quicker from the heights; and as the pace of the column increased, so did these curly little clouds.

Then, as I looked, the battalion stopped dead; half of it sank to the ground; the rest, each part separated from its neighbour, fell to pieces; and the various atoms, without any appearance of order, ran back quickly along the track so recently made.

One figure alone moved slowly--it was the apex of the spear-head, the shaft of which had broken; and in spite of the yellow and black colours, I was downright glad to see the flag returning.

"Steady, my boys, steady! Don't fire till you get the word. Remember our general trusts to the 9th Honveds."

The words and the cheer that followed them brought me back with a rush to the reality of my own position.

That which had engaged my attention as a spectator I was about to take part in as an actor.

Two battalions were advancing at the double across the plain, and others had formed up in support.

We held one of the keys of the position, and Görgei himself, trusting to Rakoczy's influence, had placed us there.

If we retreated, the battle would be lost; and no subsequent victory could ever wipe out our disgrace.

Looking at the men's faces, I did not much fear the result. The time had gone by when the 9th would run away at the first shot, as this very battle was to prove.

Steadily the men waited, trusting implicitly in their colonel, while the two battalions crossed the plain and dashed at the heights.

"Fire!"

Sharp and clear the word rang out, and every trigger was pulled at the same instant, as if the regiment had been a machine.

Down below, the slaughter was terrible; but we had to deal with some of the best fighting men who had ever followed the Austrian eagle into the battlefield.

Only the dead stopped at the foot of the heights; all the others, even the wounded, pressed on, and the arrival of the second battalion more than made up for those who had fallen.

Up they came, scorning death, and contemptuous of the Hungarian peasants so recently converted into soldiers.

But "John the Joyous" led us, and we had learned many lessons during our march over the mountains with Görgei.

Standing our ground firmly, we poured volley after volley into the midst of the climbing Austrians.

Still the survivors advanced, and, fed from below, maintained their numbers, while many of our fellows began to drop.

The colonel was everywhere, and his cheery voice encouraged those under his command.

While most of the Austrians came on, climbing and firing in the open, many adopted the wiser course of seeking cover, whence they could pick us off without much risk.

Several men of my company lost their lives in this way; but the fight came at length to a hand-grip, and it was no longer a question of bullets, but of bayonets.

Twice by main force we flung our assailants back; but they returned to the charge, cheering loudly, as if bent upon turning us out or of losing every man in the attempt. We on our side would not give way, and so the stubborn fight continued.

The enemy were continually reinforced; our losses were not made good, and the longer the struggle lasted the more unequal it became.

For myself, I feared that the attack would prove too strong; and, as Rakoczy told me afterwards, he was of the same opinion.

One would not have thought so, however, at the time of the fight. His face was full of confidence; his voice had not lost an atom of its usual cheerfulness. To his troops his presence appeared everywhere as an omen of victory.

Still the position was growing desperate, and though we might have held our own for a while longer, the enemy must finally have captured the heights, as there would have been no one left to defend them.

The colonel had posted my company at a spot where the ascent was fairly easy, and, had the white-coats once broken through, they would have turned the position from the top.

"You must die where you stand," he had said, "for the honour of the Magyars," and we had answered with a cheer.

But the enemy were not at our throats then as they were now, cutting and

stabbing, or, seizing us bodily, trying to hurl us over the cliffs.

Still we held our ground, though the company was sadly diminishing in numbers, and every fighting-man who survived was more or less seriously wounded.

I had twice escaped death myself, through the devotion of Mecsey Sándor, who, since the affair in the pass, had taken every opportunity to show his gratitude.

On the second occasion I was engaged hand to hand with an Austrian sergeant, sword against bayonet, when, my foot slipping, down, I went, completely at the fellow's mercy.

Sándor, who though hotly engaged evidently kept one eye on me, was at my side in a moment, and, parrying the sergeant's blow, dealt one himself.

My men cheered as I rose to my feet and again dashed into the thick of the fight.

Then it was that, in the very wreck of our fortunes, a cry rose from the rear--a cry that made our blood hot, and victory, at least in that particular corner of the field, certain.

"Görgei! Görgei! elijen Görgei!"

Louder and louder it grew, putting heart into every man; even the poor fellows on the ground, raising themselves with difficulty, helped to swell the chorus.

Riding along the heights, the general had seen how terribly we suffered, and springing from his horse without a moment's hesitation, had run to our help.

The staff, leaving their animals, followed; and I saw Stephen, his handsome face ablaze with passion, catch his leader, and side by side with him shoot forward into the press.

The reinforcement was few in numbers, but Görgei counted a host in himself, and the sight of his tall, spare frame and spectacled, weather-beaten countenance inspired us all with new courage.

The Austrians now gave way slowly, still fighting with sullen desperation; but we pushed them harder and harder, broke them up into little knots, forced them into a run, till, thoroughly disorganized, they reached the plain a beaten crowd.

Here their misfortunes were by no means at an end. A regiment of hussars, issuing from a wood on the right, scattered those who still kept together, and turned what was already a bad defeat into a total rout.

The cheers for Görgei rose again with tenfold vigour; but the general, taking Rakoczy by the hand, exclaimed, "Colonel, you and your brave lads have done today what I shall never forget. I trusted you to hold this position, and you have held it. Through me Hungary thanks the gallant 9th Honveds."

Then, amidst another wild outburst of cheering, he went back to the summit.

While his chief talked thus to Rakoczy, Stephen came to me.

In the struggle he had not received a scratch; but it was different with me, and my brother's face looked very grave.

"It's all right, old fellow," I said, trying to speak lightly. "Not one of these cuts is really dangerous. I'm only a little faint through loss of blood. A night's rest will put me straight."

He shook my hand warmly and followed his chief, but I noticed that more than once he turned and looked back sorrowfully.

The combat, which had lasted for six hours, now ceased on the two wings, but continued in the centre with unabated fury.

There the great guns were massed, and the veterans of both armies strove, the one party to oust its opponents, the other to maintain its position.

The guns roared, sheets of flame sprang from their muzzles, shot and shell tore, screaming, through the air. Occasionally what appeared a solid body of living fire shot skyward, accompanied by a loud report, as a powder-tumbrel was struck by one of the flying missiles.

Then for a time everything would be hidden by a dense bank of smoke, and we waited breathlessly to see it lift. But though human courage may be inexhaustible, there is a limit to human endurance; and at last, as if by common consent, both sides ceased to struggle.

"A drawn battle," said Rakoczy, "and I don't think we've had the worst of it. George, you'd better find a surgeon and have those wounds dressed. We shall have to fight again in the morning."

As I had told Stephen, my hurts were not dangerous, and directly the surgeon had bound them up I returned to the front.

The men lay on the hard ground with only their bundas to shelter them from the bitter, piercing cold that crept into their very marrows.

Rakoczy, with several officers and the least fatigued of the troops, was going about succouring the wounded; but he would not allow me to help, insisting that I needed rest. So, wrapped in my mantle, I lay down, and sad at heart watched the myriads of brilliant stars that shone in the unclouded sky.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RETREAT.

In spite of the cold I fell asleep at last, and did not waken until the morning.

The Austrians were already stirring--indeed, they had been under arms since the dawn; and I saw by the aid of my glass that three batteries had been pushed forward nearer the town.

I snatched a hasty breakfast, consisting of a piece of black bread, a slice of bacon, and a draught of silovitz, afterwards taking command of my shattered company.

The daylight, alas, showed only too plainly the havoc caused by the recent conflict. Many familiar faces were absent from the ranks, and a large number of those who answered to their names were wounded.

Still, the satisfaction of knowing we had stood our ground cheered us, and we looked forward to the coming attack without much fear for the result.

"Feel equal to another bout?" asked the colonel, coming up to me.

He had not slept since the fight began on the previous morning, but his eyes were as bright and his carriage as jaunty as ever.

"Daresay I shall get through somehow," I answered. "But what are the others waiting for? Have they had enough? The attack seems to hang fire a bit."

"Windischgratz won't strike till he can make pretty sure of hitting the mark. Probably he expects Schlick to join him."

"According to the scouts, Schlick can't arrive till it's all over."

"Don't make too sure. Schlick's a perfect demon when the guns begin to speak. His corps would have to march all night if there was a chance of getting up in time. Anyway, had I been Dembinski, I should have forced the fighting directly day broke; but no doubt the old man knows his business."

Rakoczy walked on, passing along the lines smiling good-humouredly, joking with the men, praising them for their behaviour of yesterday, and putting them in famous spirits. Certainly one had not far to seek the reason of his popularity.

Meanwhile the morning advanced, and about seven o'clock the enemy's heavy guns opened fire at Kapolna.

Evidently the attack was to be conducted on a different plan, and very soon the cause of the alteration became plain.

Our position not being threatened, we were able to look about, and from the height obtained a good view of the field.

It was just eight o'clock when Rakoczy, passing his glass to an officer, exclaimed, "That's what I feared. See the column of smoke there on our right?"

"The enemy are spreading themselves out too far. Dembinski could easily cut off their left. The Pole is getting too old for active service. Why doesn't he push forward a couple of battalions quickly?"

Rakoczy smiled. "You don't know what that column of smoke means," he

said. "It's a sign that Schlick has arrived with a fresh army corps."

"Impossible!" cried one of the officers. "His men would all have dropped on the march."

In spite of our astonishment, however, the Austrian general was on the field, and pounding away at our right wing with terrific effect.

His arrival put fresh heart into our opponents, and they moved forward in the centre, redoubling their fire on the wretched town. The tide of battle set steadily towards our centre and right, leaving us simple spectators.

I suppose it was important to keep possession of the heights, yet it seemed a pity to stand thus idly while our comrades were fighting so desperately.

Of the combat on our right we saw little, but in the centre we could distinctly see the rush of the two Austrian battalions as their officers led them against the town.

A fierce musketry fire checked them for a second, and I thought they would fall to pieces; but no--the two-headed eagle showed the way, and the brave infantry followed the national symbol.

On they went, and with an exulting cry swept into the town, from which there immediately arose tongues of fire.

The combat was now hidden from us, and we watched in the greatest excitement for what would happen.

The fight inside the town was of the most bitter nature, but, little by little, our comrades were forced back, rushing out at last in a disorderly crowd.

A couple of hundred yards away they stopped their flight, re-formed, and, led as far as we could tell by Dembinski in person, made a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to regain the town.

Three times they returned to the attack; but the Austrians, now reinforced, proved too strong, and at length, sallying out, drove the Magyars back to a farmhouse, round which a fierce conflict was maintained.

It was at this time that Stephen rode up with an order for our colonel, and instantly the regiment was on the move.

My brother's face brightened when he saw me, and he stopped to say a word or two.

I asked him how the battle was going, and he replied in a whisper, "Altogether against us; and only Görgei's bravery has kept the right. Good-bye! In an hour there will be an avalanche."

Stephen might well have made the time shorter: in half an hour we were face to face with the signs of the coming rout. At first only a few men here and there scudded away as fast as their legs would carry them, but their fright was contagious. It spread from regiment to regiment, from man to man.

The officers in vain attempted to stay the retreat. The infantry broke up

in disorder, each man trying to save himself; the artillery, infected by the sudden panic, wheeled their guns round and galloped off as fast as the horses could travel. The famous hussars, almost alone, retired slowly and in beautiful order.

Our own regiment, influenced by the sight of the fugitives, showed signs of unsteadiness; but Rakoczy, in his usual cheerful manner, threatened to shoot the first who ran, and thus averted the danger.

Very fortunate indeed it proved that the men kept their ranks, as we were suddenly assailed by a body of hussars, who did their best to ride us down.

"Steady, my lads!" cried the colonel. "Keep shoulder to shoulder. If you give way, we're lost."

The leader of the hussars was a handsome young fellow with fair hair and blue eyes, and even in the stress of the fight I recognized Captain von Theyer, one of the leaders of the Viennese insurgents.

He caught my astonished look, and dashed at me sword in hand; but a bullet struck his horse in the chest, and the animal reeled over heavily.

A trooper sprang to the ground, and, dragging his leader free, helped him to mount his own horse, and carried him out of the fray.

"A gallant fellow and a gallant deed," I said, thinking of the trooper, as the hussars galloped off.

"Well done, lads!" cried Rakoczy. "They will learn to respect the 9th Honveds."

We had, however, not yet finished with the hussars, who, led by Von Theyer, returned again and again to the charge, striving desperately to break our ranks.

Met each time by a rain of bullets, they wheeled and galloped away, though twice Von Theyer brought them within touch of the bayonets.

It seemed odd that a prominent revolutionist should thus be leading a charge of Austrian cavalry; but whatever his politics might be, there was no questioning his bravery.

Three times we sent them back with many empty saddles, but their fair-haired young leader was not to be denied.

"Steady!" exclaimed the colonel. "Keep your fire! Here they come!"

They made a brilliant show with their shining breastplates and helmets and nodding plumes as, holding their sabres ready, they thundered down on us.

"Fire!"

Steady as rocks, the Honveds kept their ground; the rifles blazed out; the hussars were checked.

No! Here they were amongst us, cutting and slashing; and foremost of them all rode Von Theyer.

A superb rider and a fine swordsman, he was the *beau ideal* of a cavalry leader, and handled his men splendidly.

As if I were the special object of attack, he rode straight at me, and crying, "Remember Vienna!" struck furiously with his sword.

With difficulty I parried that blow and several others; but Von Theyer stuck to his work, and the glittering steel flashed incessantly about my head.

I was kept far too busy to see how the fight went elsewhere, but every now and then I heard Rakoczy's cheery voice, and guessed that all was well.

Suddenly there rose a cry in German of "Back! back!" and Von Theyer, roused to a sense of his men's danger, reluctantly drew off.

It was high time. Bearing down from the left, came two squadrons of our own hussars, mounted on magnificent horses, which carried them straight through the disordered ranks of the Austrians.

Then my young opponent showed his value as a leader. With skill equal to his bravery he got his men together, and with little extra loss, as far as could be judged, retired in good order.

"That fellow meant business," said the colonel, as we continued the retreat. "See what comes from interfering in the concerns of other people."

"What do you mean? I haven't done anything to make him angry."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Rakoczy. "What about saving the fräulein's life? Do you think this young gallant likes you any the better for getting into the lady's good graces? I'm glad to see you blush; it shows there is some blood left in your body, which I began to doubt."

Later on I thought a good deal of this little speech, for I had never forgotten the fair young girl in Vienna; but just then there were many things to distract my attention.

Except for our own regiment and the regular cavalry, the Hungarian army had become a helpless, drifting mob.

Heavy guns, baggage-wagons, creaking carts filled with the wounded, infantry without arms, dismounted horsemen, knots of soldiers separated from their officers, some running, others moving with a dogged sullenness, were all jumbled together in extraordinary confusion.

Had the Austrians followed up their victory, they could have swept us all, bag and baggage, into the Theiss.

Fortunately the pursuit was confined to a single brigade, and even that we had the utmost difficulty in beating off.

About two miles eastward of Kapolna, Görgei rode up, attended by his staff, and a ringing cheer greeted his arrival.

His cap was gone, his clothes bore the marks of close hand-to-hand fighting, there was blood on his cheeks, yet he did not look downcast--only savagely determined.

"Colonel," he said, "do you see that wood? Your regiment must hold it for

the next two hours--three, if possible, but two for certain."

"We'll hold it, general, living or dead," replied Rakoczy.

"Good! If I can stop any of those wretched runaways, they shall support you."

"We'll do it by ourselves, general," cried an old sergeant; and the men, repeating his words, cheered loudly.

The general's face lit up with a proud smile.

"I'll trust you, my fine fellows!" he said, and off he dashed at full gallop, the officers of the staff trying in vain to keep pace with him.

We reached the wood and took up a position, just in time to receive the attack of a lancer regiment, which came on with gaily fluttering pennons.

Down toppled the first rank, horse and rider, as the rifle fire blazed out. The others, wheeling to right and left, galloped off in two long lines.

Again they came, but it was cruel work for them. Hardly an enemy could they see, yet the bullets sped fast and true, and hardly a lance-point reached the line of rifles.

Then, to complete the misfortune of these gallant fellows, the hussars, making a brave show in their gaudy trappings, again came to our assistance, riding up from the left, and, before the lancers had time to re-form, scattered them in all directions.

"A cheer for the hussars, my lads!" cried Rakoczy, and we sent up a shout that might have been heard a mile off.

The brave fellows waved their sabres in response as they galloped past to their former position on the left of the wood, out of sight, but ready to lend us a helping hand.

The time dragged on very slowly. The lancers had disappeared, but a regiment of Croats took their place, and peppered us from a distance with their long guns.

Then we heard on our left the rattle of sabres, the clash of steel against breastplate and helmet, "Forward! forward!" in German, and knew that our friendly hussars were engaged in fierce conflict.

At the same time the Croats, like savage dogs unleashed, bounded across the open ground.

The Honveds stood firm, and fired as fast as they could load; but in the excitement the bullets flew wide, and though many of the southern warriors fell, we could not stay the onslaught.

They had left their stanitzas behind, and with wild yells came on, their famous red mantles fluttering in the wind, their terrible handjars gripped tightly.

Our men continued firing till the very last instant, then a hand-to-hand struggle began.

The active Croats jumped like wild cats at our throats, and it was a case of life or death with every man thus attacked. None asked for quarter, none thought of giving it; it was a terrible life-and-death struggle between Croat and Magyar.

Had half a battalion been sent to the help of our assailants, we must have been driven out, so evenly were the scales balanced; fortunately they were left to do the work by themselves, and just failed.

Every minute after the first rude shock helped us, for the hot fit of the Croats cooled, while the Magyars fought with increased stubbornness.

Finally, we pushed them out of the wood, and the ping of the bullets was heard again as the Magyars, reloading their rifles, poured a volley into the midst of the fugitives.

I watched them go, and then, faint from loss of blood, leaned against a tree.

Another victory such as that, I well knew, would clean out the 9th Honveds, and so did Rakoczy; but he didn't say so.

On the contrary, I heard him praising the men for their bravery, and telling them that with another good regiment they could drive the Austrians back to Vienna.

When he caught sight of me he said softly,--

"Hurt, George?"

"Another scratch," I replied faintly; "but, I say, colonel, what has become of the hussars?"

"Vanished. Beaten off by numbers, I expect. We shall have those lancers gliding amongst us soon; but come and lie down behind a tree for a while. The two hours are nearly up, and we shall be moving."

"No, I shall be all right; but isn't that a cloud of fog?"

"It is, my boy--the jolliest fog you've ever seen, and just in the nick of time. That will stop the Austrians better than a thousand bayonets. Well, if you won't lie down, you won't.--My lads, I don't think Captain Botskay's company need hang their heads when the battle of Kapolna is mentioned;" and he went on his way, carrying encouragement to every part of the line.

Rakoczy had blessed the fog; and, indeed, it proved of the utmost service to us.

Without our knowing it, the situation had become critical. The friendly hussars had been compelled to retreat; the Austrian lancers were working round our left; the Croats, mad for vengeance, were clamouring to be led to the attack; and two light batteries had been pushed up to shell us from the wood.

At the very first discharge of the cannons, Rakoczy retired the greater part of the regiment, confident that the enemy would not attack for some time.

My company was left to further the deception, and between the discharges of the big guns the men kept up a vigorous musketry fire, which, though it did

little or no damage, warned the enemy we were still in our places.

It was gloomy work standing there in the thick fog, while the shot and shell screaming over our heads lopped the branches from the trees or tore great holes in the ground. Occasionally a man would sink with a deep groan, but for the most part we were untouched; and when at length the colonel sent us word to withdraw, we were able to carry off all our wounded.

The fog by now had become so thick that we could not see the trees, though we felt them frequently; but out of the wood the marching was easier.

We tramped on in the midst of the darkness like a regiment of lost souls.

The earth was blotted out completely. It was worse even than what we had encountered in the mountains. We could see nothing, and hear nothing beyond the muffled sound of our own footsteps.

As far as I could tell, we might be marching right into the midst of the Austrian troops.

The fog filled our nostrils and throats, almost choking us.

The intense silence was appalling. For my part, I should gladly have welcomed the roar of hostile cannon, just to be sure we were still in the land of the living.

The wound in my shoulder, which Mecsey Sándor had bandaged, bled afresh; my head grew heavy; my eyes ached with pain; I felt hardly able to keep upright. Once my foot slipped, and the man against whom I stumbled, taking my arm, supported me.

I was ashamed of my weakness, yet it was good to lean upon a strong arm, and for a time I walked quite steadily.

An extraordinary accident put an end to my powers of endurance, and left me with no more strength than that of a baby.

We were walking step for step, my companion and I, when suddenly I brought my foot, not to the ground, but into the air, and pitching forward, fell into icy-cold water.

My companion came too. Others followed us, some dropping clear into the water, some breaking holes in the coating of ice that before our arrival had covered its surface.

In the thick fog we had walked into a stream. Fortunately it was of no great depth, the water being only up to our waists; but the shock, the bitter cold, and the struggle for breath took away all my remaining strength.

The soldier, however, kept firm hold, and pulling me on my feet, pushed and dragged me till we reached the opposite side, when another man pulled me out.

Concerning the rest of the inarch I remember very little. Two men seemed to be carrying me cradle-fashion, and occasionally a tall, dimly-seen figure put some food into my mouth.

Sometimes they placed me on the ground, where I stayed for hours; then raising me again they carried me as before.

The fog went with us all the time, so I could not divide night from day, and no sound ever broke the weird silence.

At last there came a time--how long or short soever from the beginning of the journey I did not know--when I saw the burning of many lights, as of huge watch-fires, and heard the shouting of men.

My bearers joined in the noise, and then, putting me down, fell to waving their arms violently, and the black shadows going to and fro across the lights looked like windmills.

After that they took me to some covered place, where, being warm and comfortable, I straightway fell asleep.

From then my impressions grew more distinct. I remember seeing Rakoczy's face, which looked less cheerful than usual, and the spectacled countenance of Görgei.

I thought Stephen also looked sorrowfully at me, but that was a dream, as I afterwards discovered.

It would have suited me to lie thus snug and cosy for ever; but the march was not ended, and one day I was carried into the open and placed in the bottom of a cart.

Several other men were already there, and one in particular groaned most miserably at every jolt of the clumsy vehicle.

Of course, I saw little of what went on, but the fog had departed, and the blessed light of day itself cheered me, while it was good again to hear the different sounds--the rumbling of wheels, the neigh of horses, the shouts of the drivers, the steady tramp, tramp as of the marching of thousands of men.

That ghostly regiment, gliding through the blackness, unseen, unheard, had in my weakened state preyed on my nerves.

Now I was really in the land of living beings again, and I smiled to myself at hearing the crack of the carter's whip, and the familiar words addressed to the horses.

Somewhere on the journey we halted a long, long time, and at length proceeded very slowly and cautiously.

We were crossing the Theiss on a narrow and temporary bridge, though the infantry had gone over on the ice.

Soon after this the wounded man at my side ceased his groaning, which enabled me to go to sleep; but I did not guess that the poor fellow would never disturb any of us again.

The next time the wagon halted, a man, clambering into it, brought a flask, from which several of us drank.

The stuff, whatever its name, had a strange flavour, something like new milk; but it warmed me all over, and even before the cart again started I was sound asleep.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE SICK LIST.

I awoke to find myself lying on a heap of straw in a mud hovel, having one very narrow door, and a window about a foot square, through which the daylight tried to force a way.

The meagre light from two candles showed that I was not the only inmate of this poverty-stricken dwelling.

Ranged round the walls were five other figures, each on a bundle of straw and wrapped in a bunda.

The air was very close, and there was a strong smell of pigs, which made me think that some unfortunate animals had been turned out, or perhaps converted into pork, to make room for us.

However, I felt warm, and warmth in those days was the greatest happiness.

I positively shuddered at the mere remembrance of the intense cold of the last week or two.

It was all very calm and still, when a man in the opposite corner sat up, and in a high-pitched voice began to sing with all his might the well-known revolutionary song of Petöfi--"Rise, Magyars, rise!"

He was evidently in a high state of fever and perfectly delirious, but he went right through the song without a mistake or a pause, and finished by cheering lustily for Hungary.

Seen by the dim light, the spectacle was wonderfully striking. The bandages stained with blood, the face deadly white, the large, dark, fiery eyes burning with fever, the thin arm, freed from its covering, energetically beating time--all these moved me profoundly.

"That's Petreskey," said the man next to me. "He takes a fit every now and then and makes that row. We came from Kapolna in the same cart, and if the black and yellow dogs hadn't shot my arm off, I'd have pitched him out. Who wants to

hear that stuff? Lie down, will you, and let a fellow go to sleep."

"Shut up, Janko! Can't you see the chap's out of his mind? Let the poor beggar sing. It does him good."

"Shut up yourself!" growled my neighbour. "D'you think I want to lie here listening to that rubbish when my good right arm's gone from the shoulder? 'Rise, Magyars, rise' won't put that on again."

Meanwhile Petreskey, staring round the room with his wild eyes, broke out again, and sang till he was too weak to utter another note.

The two other men had taken no notice of the incident, but lay on their straw like logs.

I tried to get into talk with the surly Janko, but he only grunted morosely and covered his head with his bunda.

The next man, however, told me we had crossed the Theiss, and were now encamped at Tisza-Fured, on the road to Debreczin, but more than that he did not know.

Towards noon a surgeon paid us a visit; but before that we had been fed by two soldier-servants, and I for one thoroughly enjoyed the hot, nourishing broth which they brought.

The surgeon seemed a tender-hearted fellow, and had a kind word for every man in the room, even the bad-tempered Janko. He came to me last, and asked if I were not George Botskay, a captain in the 9th Honveds.

"What there is left of him," I answered; "but there doesn't appear to be much."

"Nonsense! You'll be marching to Pesth in a week or so. Now you're fit to be moved, we must take you out of this. I'll see your colonel."

I was glad to hear Rakoczy still lived, and inquired anxiously after Stephen.

"On General Görgei's staff?" asked the surgeon pleasantly. "Oh yes, but he is hardly ever to be found; the general keeps him galloping about the country day and night. At present I believe he is at Debreczin. Keep up your courage; you've pulled through the worst of it."

This was pleasant hearing, and when the surgeon finally departed I nestled down on my heap of straw with quite a feeling of content. The day and night passed without further incident, except that the poor, crazed Petreskey woke me up from a sound sleep by another vigorous performance of "Rise, Magyars, rise!"

Soon after breakfast the door opened, and Rakoczy entered, his face beaming with smiles, his eyes bright and sparkling.

Stephen had once compared him with a sunbeam, but to me that morning he seemed more like a million sunbeams rolled into one.

At the sight of him even Janko forgot to look sulky, and saluted with his remaining arm.

None of the patients belonged to his regiment, but he went to each in turn,

soothing the excited Petreskey, and speaking kindly words of sympathy and cheer to all.

When, having satisfied himself that not one of the poor fellows would feel himself neglected, he came to me, he was fairly bubbling over with pleasure.

His lips twitched nervously, and I believe his eyes were moist; but he carried the matter off in his usual jocular way.

"Well, George," he exclaimed, laughing, "I hear the silovitz got into your head, and you pushed poor Mecsey Sándor into the river. There's nothing like a cold bath when the brain's heated; but 'twas rather rough on Sándor, who had drunk none of your plum brandy. However, the poor fellow bears no malice, and will be glad to see you in your sober senses again."

"Then it was Mecsey who saved my life?"

"Truth, you may say that. He hauled you out from under the ice, and pushed you on to dry land."

"What a night it was! I should think the whole regiment had a drenching."

"Yes, but they didn't go at it in your hot-headed way. After your company had found the stream, the others walked in quietly, and out at the other side. Görgei says he didn't think you were in such a hurry to retreat."

"Don't poke fun, but tell me what happened. Were there many lives lost?"

"At the water-jump? No. A few ugly bruises covered the mischief. We lost heavily in the wood though, and have had to fill up the gaps with raw material. You'll be sorry to miss the chance of drilling the recruits."

"Had quite enough of that at Pesth," I replied, laughing.

"And a very fine drill-sergeant you'd have made by sticking at it; but I'm keeping the men outside waiting. They're going to take you to another hut. It's quite as dirty as this; but you'll have more room, and be with the officers of your own regiment."

He went to the door and called two men, who carried me out tenderly to an ambulance, and then, helped by two comrades, bore me some two hundred yards over very rough and uneven ground to a hovel which might have been twin brother to the one I had just left.

There were the same narrow door and square foot of window, while the furniture consisted of three bundles of straw, two being already occupied. My nose also informed me that the former inmates of the place had been on terms of social intercourse with the pigs.

"Gentlemen," said the colonel, "I have brought Captain Botskay to share your apartment."

At the sound of the colonel's voice the figures on the straw showed signs of life, stirred, and finally sat up, when I recognized them as two young lieutenants named Thurzo and Dobozy.

"Glad to see you, captain," said the first, adding quickly, "That is, sorry you've been hurt, but right glad of your company."

Dobozy had been wounded in the wood, and I had sent him to the rear, which he remembered and now gratefully acknowledged.

"I must be off," said the colonel, "but will look in to-morrow. Meanwhile I'll send Mecsey Sándor to wait on you; he'll be delighted, and you can't very well push him into another river."

The soldiers had carried me with great care, but even so my limbs ached with the jolting, and after a little talk with my companions I was glad to drop into a sound sleep. Towards the evening Sándor arrived, and I thanked him warmly for what he had done.

"'Twas nothing, captain," replied he stolidly--"nothing at all compared with what you did for me in the mountains. You risked your life; I didn't."

"You saved mine, though, and I shan't forget it."

Neither of us spoke on the subject again; but I resolved that, when the war ended, the honest fellow should have reason to remember his brave act.

The two lieutenants were already strong enough to hobble about, but several days passed before I was able to join them.

Rakoczy called every morning, sometimes in the evening as well, and his visits did more toward our recovery than all the doctor's stuff.

One day, however, he came to say good-bye. The regiment had received orders to recross the Theiss.

"We're going to drive the Austrians out of Szolnok, unless they take it into their heads to drive us back to Tisza-Fured. Bern has done wonders in Transylvania. The white-coats called the Russians in to help them, but the Pole has cleared the country of the lot. The news has put heart into Vetter, and he intends to move forward with the whole army."

"What has Vetter to do with it?" I asked in surprise.

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know. He's the new chief. There's been a bit of a squabble, and Dembinski had to stand down; but it's all right now. Make haste and get well, or you'll have no share in planting the red, white, and green colours on the walls of Vienna;" and he went out, laughing merrily.

I asked my comrades what the colonel meant by a squabble, but neither knew what had happened. Both, however, rejoiced at the fall of Dembinski; and Dobozy, who had been wounded at Poroszlo, said there was some angry talk among the officers of Görgei's brigade at that place.

We questioned Sándor, but he knew little beyond the fact that there had been a general kravalle, or brawl, which brought Kossuth post-haste from Debreczin, and ended in Vetter being proclaimed commander-in-chief.

The doctor told us the same story, but with few fresh details; and it was not

until Stephen found time to hunt me up that we learned the truth.

My brother had altered much in the short time since the war broke out.

From a boy, he seemed to have become a man all at once, and I cannot say that I liked the change.

To me he was the same loving brother he had always been, and we embraced each other with every mark of affection; but there was a sternness of purpose in his face and a determined courage that I thought ill suited one who was really little more than a lad.

The two lieutenants had very considerately gone outside, but now I called them in and introduced them to my brother.

"The general gives you little leisure time," Thurzo remarked.

"Very little," replied Stephen; "but then he gives himself less. I doubt if even Kossuth works harder."

"Glad to hear you give the dictator his due."

"Oh, I don't deny that Kossuth is an extraordinary man, a genius of the first water, and in his way a devoted patriot. Whether we win or lose the game, Kossuth's name will live for ever. Without his marvellous eloquence we couldn't have carried on the war; but though I admire the man I doubt his object. Kossuth the patriot deserves well of his country, but Kossuth the democrat is another person. We don't want a French revolution in our country."

"Bravo!" cried Dobozy. "Hungary a kingdom is my motto; and not Hungary a republic."

"The 9th Honveds are all royalists," remarked Thurzo quietly.

"And every regiment in the brigade," said Stephen. "Kossuth discovered that not very long ago."

"Tell us about it, Stephen. We've only heard just the bare outline."

"Well, the fuss began at Poroszlo during the retreat. As you know, Görgei's brigade did the covering work, and halted at Poroszlo. The place was strongly entrenched and fortified, and Dembinski sent orders that we were to occupy a position in front of the guns. You may be sure Görgei wasn't such an idiot as to obey, and the general talked about putting him under arrest. He sent off a messenger full speed to Debreczin, but by the time Kossuth arrived the game was over."

"What had happened?"

Stephen smiled grimly; he seemed to have forgotten how to laugh.

"We promptly shut the Pole up," he said; "and Kossuth found his chief general a prisoner."

"And he submitted?"

"What else could he do? We were all in one mind. So the upshot of the matter was that the Diet gave the command to Vetter."

"Not to Görgei?"

"No," said Stephen bitterly. "It's my opinion they're jealous of him. By the way, your regiment has distinguished itself at Szolnok. It led the attack, and fairly drove the Austrians out of the town."

"Well done, 9th Honveds!" exclaimed Thurzo. "Wish I'd been with them!"

"There will be enough and to spare of fighting before the war ends," said my brother. "The army moves in a few days for Pesth."

I asked him to look in again before they left, and he promised to do so if Görgei gave him a chance.

When he had gone, my comrades talked over the news, and it was plain that, like myself, they foresaw trouble in the future.

Thurzo put the matter very straight.

"If the Austrians win," he said, "we shall all have to pay, and a very dreary performance it will be. If the victory falls to us, we shall very soon be flying at one another's throats."

"The army is with Görgei," I said.

"But Kossuth has a powerful following, and the Poles will help him to a man."

"Worse still," said Dobozy. "Hungary is fast becoming the dumping-ground for the republicans of every country in Europe. Germans, Italians, French are all swarming over here like carrion-crows to a dead horse."

"They wish to help the cause."

"By forming a republic," replied Dobozy angrily; "and we won't have it. I'm like your brother, and think Kossuth a great genius; but he isn't the only man in Hungary."

I record these remarks, because they serve to show how, even at this early period of the campaign, a wide gulf was opening between the two parties in the country. Later, it formed a deep grave in which we buried our hopes.

Before the war ended we proved up to the hilt the truth of that old saying, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Another day passed, and then Stephen came to say good-bye.

"I'm off with an important order for General Damjanics," he said. "The camp breaks up to-morrow. Why do you look so gloomy? You're mending nicely, and will be fit to travel in another week."

"I hope so. It isn't pleasant to be left behind when others are going to the front."

"Fortune of war, George, and it's no use grumbling. Well, good-bye; we shall meet in Pesth."

I embraced him rather sadly, and, going outside, watched him mount and ride away.

All that day we looked on at the preparations for the march, and early the next morning went to see the breakup of the camp. The men, who were in good spirits, sang at their work, cheered the generals--Görgei and Klapka in particular--and showed a willing eagerness to be led against the enemy.

There must have been fifty thousand of them altogether, besides a host of camp-followers, and they were filing past till late at night--batteries of artillery accompanied by smart, keen-looking gunners; dashing hussars in their showy uniforms; veterans who had made good many a desperate fight under the black and yellow banners; home-trained Honveds drilled into decent soldiers; raw recruits indifferently armed, but supposed to be valuable on account of their enthusiasm; while over all flew our glorious red, white, and green colours.

We went back to our hovel, where the patient Sándor had prepared supper, and drank a glass of silovitz to the success of our comrades.

I pass over the chronicles of the next week. They would prove but dreary reading, since we had nothing to do from morning till night but grumble at being left behind.

The unfortunate doctor was so baited and badgered that at last, I verily believe, in sheer self-defence, he reported us as fit for service; and one fine morning, though the weather was still bitterly cold, we left Tisza-Fured with about a hundred soldiers, who were going to rejoin their various regiments.

Having plenty of provisions, we followed in the track of the army, as being the safest and most direct route; and everywhere the inhabitants of the villages through which we passed gave us a hearty welcome.

At Kapolna, the scene of our former defeat, we made a long stay, having arrived there about noon, and not leaving till next morning.

The town presented a very melancholy appearance. Many of the houses were burned to the ground, and in every direction traces of the fierce fight were plainly visible.

Still, the sufferings of the people had not weakened their loyalty to the cause, and the leading citizens feasted us generously.

For the first time since leaving Pesth I slept in a real bed, and the sensation was quite novel.

It was so extremely comfortable that I did not wish to turn out the next morning, but Sándor kept up such a tremendous hammering at the door that I was compelled to rise. I learned from my host that Görgei, with the seventh corps, was marching towards Hatvan; while Vetter, commanding the main army, was trying to push himself in between Jellachich's corps and Windischgratz, the latter of whom lay at Godolo.

Where we should find the 9th Honveds I could not tell, but decided to join Görgei, on the chance that they were with him.

After a hearty breakfast, I went into the street, where the men were already assembled under Thurzo and Dobozy.

Hitherto there had been little fear of danger; but now I took some precautions, since we might likely enough meet with the scouting parties either of Windischgratz or Jellachich, the latter of whom made very free use of his cavalry.

Many of the inhabitants assembled to give us a parting cheer, and we set off in high spirits.

The governor had provided me with a couple of trustworthy guides, as he feared the Austrians held the highroad, and we had no wish to run into their arms.

The ground was covered with snow over a foot deep, and we stepped out as briskly as we could, to keep ourselves warm. I had left the heavy carts which had contained our provisions at Kapolna, dividing what was left of the food equally amongst the men; and this proved fortunate, as the lumbering vehicles would have hindered us greatly.

In the evening we reached an isolated village, and nearly terrified the good people out of their wits, as, in the gloom, they mistook us for the enemy.

However, the matter was soon put straight. The men were willingly received into the houses and made welcome; while I, having posted the sentries, went to sup with the curé--a very hospitable and obliging host.

Twice during the night I visited the sentries, finding all quiet; and on the following day the guides told me they thought the most dangerous part of the journey was past. This proved right; nowhere did we meet with a trace of the Austrians, while the villagers assured us we should soon overtake Görgei.

The guides again took to the highroad, which after-events showed we need not have left, and we continued our march until within a mile or two of the village called Hort. Here we came upon a number of camp-followers, who said Görgei was attacking the Austrians in the village, and almost at the same time there fell on our ears the roar of heavy guns. My men were fatigued by a long march, but they brightened at the sound of the familiar music, and were for running forward to help in the fight; but I thought Görgei might be trusted to win the battle without the aid of my scratch detachment, and proceeded at the ordinary pace. By the time we reached Hort, our comrades were driving the Austrians through the streets of Hatvan, and finally over the river Zagywa.

"Just our luck!" grumbled Thurzo, as I halted the men in the town and looked about for a responsible officer; "half a day sooner, and we should have been in the thick of it. Listen! There's a big fight going on down by the river."

"Our fellows trying to capture a bridge, most likely," observed Dobozy, which was really the case.

"Beg pardon, captain," said Sándor, "but there's a man of our regiment going to the rear; perhaps he can tell us where the colonel is."

This was a good idea, and I put the question to the man, whose arm was gashed by a sabre cut.

"Outside the town, captain," he replied. "In a field to the right."

After thanking the man, I set my detachment in motion once more, glad at the thought of again meeting my genial friend.

CHAPTER XI.

GÖRGEI TO THE RESCUE.

The noise of the battle died away as we left the town and made for the field where the 9th Honveds were resting after their exertions. As usual they had been pretty roughly handled; but Görgei had found time to thank them for their bravery, and that paid for everything.

Some were eating and drinking; others, wrapped in their bundas, were already fast asleep. The colonel was just returning from visiting the wounded.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed; "what are you doing here? Thought you were at Tisza-Fured. Who are those fellows?"

"They've just come from hospital to rejoin their regiments. I thought perhaps you'd tell me what to do with them."

"All right. I'll attend to it.--Glad to see you, Dobozy.--A little bit too late for the fight, Thurzo. We've had another turn at our old friend Schlick. Hot while it lasted; but we carried too many guns for him. Plucky chap, though. I'd invite you into my tent if I had one; but you can take your choice of the ground--there's plenty to choose from.--Any of my fellows amongst that lot, Botskay? Thanks. Let them stand out.--Back again, my lads? Good-luck to you.--Now, George, come along and we'll dispose of the others; they look as if they want a rest."

The colonel rattled on in his lively strain, passed the men on to the proper authorities, stopped here and there to joke with his friends, and then took me back to the regiment, where we joined the other officers at their evening meal.

"Yes," he said cheerfully, in answer to some remark, "things are shaping well at present. If only Görgei had a free hand, the white-coats would soon be bundling out of Pesth."

This seemed to be the general opinion, though here and there one heard a

word in praise of Vetter, and even of Dembinski, the late chief.

It was the second day after the affair at Hatvan when Stephen rode up to the quarters of the 9th Honveds.

"I expected to find you here," he exclaimed cheerfully. "Feel all right again?"

"Thanks, old chap; I'm as well as ever. As for you, this soldiering seems to suit you perfectly. Haven't seen you look so smiling for ages."

He actually laughed. "Not heard the news? Well, it will be known in an hour or two. Vetter's resigned, and Görgei has been made chief."

"Then we can begin to pack up?"

"Yes. There won't be much rest for any one till we're in Pesth."

"And not much then."

"No. Of course, I don't claim to be in the general's secrets, but I know him well enough to feel sure he won't stop till we get to Vienna. By the way, that reminds me of a queer circumstance. Do you remember Von Theyer?"

I nodded briskly.

"He's turned imperialist, and is either a captain or major in the hussars. The fellow made a dead set at me the other day, and I should advise you to be careful."

Thereupon I related what had happened at Kapolna, upon which Stephen repeated his warning more seriously, saying that in Von Theyer I had, no doubt, a special and determined enemy.

"If possible, he will do you mischief," he continued; "so be on your guard. Plainly he is a very clever fellow, or he would not so easily have hoodwinked the authorities, and he has courage enough for anything."

"Yes, he makes a dashing cavalry leader; but why should he be so bitter against us? We haven't harmed the fellow."

Stephen smiled, and made almost the same remark as Rakoczy at Kapolna.

"Have you forgotten the fräulein?" he asked. "No, I see you have not by the blush on your face. Well, my boy, Von Theyer wants to keep the fräulein's favours for himself. Understand?"

I nodded lightly, and Rakoczy coming up at the moment, the talk took a fresh turn.

Stephen's news soon spread, and, in our part of the army at least, gave general satisfaction.

Officers and men alike had perfect confidence in Görgei's judgment, and the only fear expressed was that he would be hampered by the orders of the civil government.

For a time, however, we were too busy with the work of preparation to think much of anything else.

Exactly what was in hand, of course, we did not know; but on the night of the third of April a rumour spread through the camp that the army would march

at daybreak.

Directly after breakfast the regiments mustered, arms were examined, instructions issued to officers; and as soon as it was well light we moved out in three divisions by the highroad running to Pesth.

Görgei commanded in person, and under him were Generals Klapka, Aulich, and Damjanics.

Our regiment formed part of the first corps, which advanced by the right, keeping in touch, however, with the two others. Görgei had left fifteen thousand men at Hatvan, but we were still nearly thirty thousand strong; and our object apparently was to prevent Jellachich from joining the main army under Windischgratz.

"There's the first move," cried young Thurzo excitedly, as away on our left one of Aulich's batteries opened fire.

"And the answer to it," said I, as the enemy responded with a terrific storm of shot and shell. "It must be warm over there."

The battle soon developed, not reaching us, however, though occasionally we caught glimpses of it as we marched on to take up our position near the village of Tampio-Biscke.

From a mounted messenger sent in search of Klapka we learned that the Croats, by a brilliant charge, had captured four guns, but were afterwards driven back, and could now barely hold their own.

Jellachich was anxiously awaiting aid from the Austrians. Should it not come, his army would almost certainly be destroyed.

"Rather uninteresting work this," grumbled Thurzo. "Why, we were almost as lively down at Tisza-Fured."

"Can't make out exactly why we are here," answered a comrade. "We aren't actors, for certain; while, as spectators, we get a very poor view of the performance."

"Listen!" I interrupted as a thunderous roar of heavy guns broke out apparently close upon us. "The Austrians are over the river."

"Hurrah!" cried Thurzo; "now for our share in the fight!"

Poor fellow! I have often wondered since if he would have shown such eagerness had he known what was coming.

Rakoczy spoke a word to the men, exhorting them to be steady; then we stood awaiting orders.

They did not come. The roar of the guns was unceasing, drowning the rattle of musketry and the shrieks of the wounded; the blinding flashes played perpetually round their muzzles; our advanced guard was nearly annihilated, though that we only guessed.

We leaned on our swords and wondered, while the men fumbled impatiently

with their firearms; Rakoczy alone, smiling and genial, showed neither uneasiness nor concern.

Suddenly an officer dashed up, hatless, bleeding, and holding his reins in his right hand. He spoke to the colonel, who, without a moment's delay, gave orders that the regiment should advance at the double.

From that moment the horror of the fight began for us.

Moving out from the low sand-hills that had hitherto sheltered us, we found ourselves very shortly in the thick of it.

The Austrians had placed their batteries in such an admirable position that not only were our guns partly silenced, but the head of the column was blown clean away.

One battery pumped shot and shell into our flank as we went by, while another continued to draw lines through the troops in front of us.

I concluded that we were required to support an attack on the guns, when a loud cry from the men announced that something was happening.

I have never seen a more peculiar sight.

The remnant of the column began to bend from one side to the other, for all the world like a boat rocking in the water. The movement was slow at first, but it soon increased in speed, and then the column broke in pieces.

At this the Austrians, plying the guns with renewed vigour, literally swept the plain with their fire, which put an end to the shattered column.

In an instant a fine body of disciplined soldiers was changed into a fear-stricken mob flying for dear life.

Away went bayonet and rifle, cartridge-pouch, and everything that by impeding flight might lessen the chance of safety.

A shiver of indecision passed through our regiment at the sight; but Rakoczy's calmness stopped the mischief, at least for a time, and, under his directions, we opened our ranks to let the runaways through.

On they came, shouting, yelling, and so blind with fear that I believe many of them did not recognize us.

To stop them just then would have been impossible; it would be well if they did not carry the regiment off in their wild career.

With heads bent and muscles stretched to breaking-point, they thundered along, seeing nothing, caring for nothing, except to get away.

Young Thurzo, mad with shame and rage, shook his fist and called them bitter names, any one of which at another time would have cost him his life.

Now they passed unchallenged; the fugitives heard nothing but the hissing of those terrible Austrian shells that had cost the column so dearly.

Chiefly through the colonel's influence, the regiment stood firm, and, directly the runaways were past, proceeded to re-form its ranks.

A moment's glance to the front, however, showed that another disaster was in store.

Windischgratz, noticing the break-up of the column, ordered the battery to cease firing, and immediately launched two cavalry regiments--one of cuirassiers, one of hussars--to finish the work.

We were, as I have already said, in the very act of reforming when they dashed at us.

With five minutes' grace we might have made somewhat of a stand, but now they were too quick for us.

I heard the colonel's "Steady, lads, steady! Stand your ground!" and then a blazing volley of musketry that brought down many a stalwart trooper.

The cuirassiers were astonished by this warm reception, but they could not turn back if they would--their speed was too great.

Helmets and cuirasses flashed in the sunlight as the horsemen sprang into our ranks, cutting and slashing on all sides.

There are many safer places than a broken square in a cavalry charge.

Before the Honveds found a chance of running away they fought desperately, stabbing with their bayonets at men and horses, or making serviceable weapons of their clubbed rifles.

In such a *mêlée* it was almost necessarily a case of every man for himself; but a few of the officers stuck together, and by degrees gathered round them the steadiest of the men.

The colonel was at their head, and I joined them with young Thurzo, who was wild with grief. He had taken part in two battles, and each had ended in defeat.

By this time the larger part of the regiment was in full flight, and the cuirassiers, finding the way open, followed in pursuit.

We formed ourselves into a square, officers and privates shoulder to shoulder, with Rakoczy on foot to lead us.

I had caught the colours as they dropped from the grasp of the man who bore them, and they still fluttered bravely overhead.

I have said that Windischgratz sent out two cavalry regiments, and the second now charged hotly on our poor remnant.

Amongst the officers Von Theyer showed conspicuously, and, as before, he paid me special attention, which was flattering but uncomfortable.

However, we beat the hussars off time and again, and continued to retire steadily, though not without great loss.

It was pitiful to see man after man drop dead or grievously wounded, but the others closed up and ever showed an unbroken front.

Poor Thurzo, whom I had learned to like well, and who marched out so gaily

to the fight that morning, met his death here. Two troopers dashed at him with uplifted sabres: one he shot dead with his pistol; the other cleft him from head to chin.

Poor fellow! He had been much afraid that Aulich's corps would get all the fighting.

There he lay dead, and his greatest friend could do no more than give him the fleetest of passing thoughts.

Back we went steadily; and, though death was busy in our ranks, yet the square grew larger, for many fugitives belonging both to our own and other regiments joined us.

How the battle went elsewhere it was impossible for us to guess, but the utter rout of our corps was painfully apparent.

Once we set up a cheer as a small party of cuirassiers went galloping back, but the cheer changed into a cry of rage when we saw they were dragging a captured gun.

Another and another followed. The hussars yelled exultingly, and, nerved by the sight, made another effort to break the square.

Instantly we halted; the front rank men kneeled down; the rifles were levelled; there was a line of light, a loud report, and once more the hussars were thrown back.

It was just after this that a shout arose which put heart into the most depressed.

From the throats of thousands there leaped a cry of "Görgei! Görgei!" The runaways stopped in their headlong flight. A part of Damjanic's division hurried to the scene, and flung themselves across the path of the victors.

The rout was stayed. The Austrians who had followed in the wake of their cavalry were brought to a standstill; the battle, which had passed us, now began to return. Our eyes danced with joy as we saw the white-coats come back at a run.

Following them closely, Görgei and his staff rode at the head of Schwartzenberg's Hungarian regiment. Rakoczy, seizing his opportunity, led us forward to join them.

The tide had turned with a vengeance.

Back went the Austrians--horse, foot, and field-guns--not exactly broken, yet in extreme disorder, and seeking shelter under their two fixed batteries.

Now we had a taste of the reception our advanced guard had met with earlier in the day, and understood how it was they failed to hold their ground.

Görgei quickly made up his mind what to do.

We saw him speak to his staff, and two officers darted off, one towards us, one towards the rear.

Our messenger was Stephen, his face flushed, his eyes glowing with excitement.

He dashed up to the colonel, saluted, pointed with his sword, delivered his message, threw me a kindly look in passing, and was gone.

Rakoczy lost not a moment, but, pointing to the battery, exclaimed quietly, "My lads, the general says we are to take that battery; the sooner we reach it the better."

The men cheered in reply; but many a lip twitched nervously, and more than one face paled, for the colonel's words were a message of death.

The colonel knew it too; and, as we started, he gave my hand a slight pressure as in token of farewell. But his voice was firm, his face full of quiet confidence, his glance proud and smiling. The sacrifice was for his country: let it be made.

Then away we went, and at the same moment the veterans from Damjanic's division started for the second battery.

Unfortunately, there was little cover on our route; and, as the colonel had said, our best plan was to reach the sandhill where the battery was posted in the shortest possible time.

A terrible fire opened on us at once, but the first flight of shells passed harmlessly; the second killed a few men and smashed the flag-pole I carried; at the third we flung ourselves into a gully of sand, Rakoczy alone remaining upright.

Then, springing to our feet, we ran on, cheering frantically as a regiment of hussars dashed up from the right straight at the flank of the battery.

The horsemen were still a long way off, but they rode hard, and would reach the guns in time to give us help.

"Forward! forward!" shouted Rakoczy; and the brave fellow, fleet of foot as a deer, led the way several yards in advance.

Still carrying the shattered pole, I toiled on, while the great guns, belching forth fire and flame, poured their deadly missiles into the midst of us.

Once, tripping over a prostrate body, I fell to the ground heavily, and lay for a moment half-stunned; the next I was on my feet, and running with all my might to get a place in the front.

"The flag!" I gasped, overtaking the rear. "Make way for the flag!"

Everywhere now the Austrians were making a stubborn last stand. If only they could roll us back ever so little, the day would be theirs.

Through a rift in the smoke-cloud I saw a hussar regiment ride out from behind the battery, and guessed they intended to meet the charge of our own horsemen half-way.

The curtain dropped again; I could see no more. Rakoczy was still unhurt, for his voice sounded clearly above the din, and the men responded to his cry of "Forward!" with a cheer.

Then we were there, so unexpectedly that I stared amazedly at the long, black monsters which the gunners could not spike.

I sprang on one and waved the colours, while the men cheered madly.

Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, there went by a ragged line of horsemen, spurring hard, and leaning over the heads of their animals that, with foam-splashed lips, distended nostrils, and heaving sides, strained every muscle.

We gazed open-mouthed at the apparition, and then gave ourselves up to renewed cheering as our own hussars--Stephen riding neck by neck with their colonel--dashed in pursuit.

Farther away on the left, the regiment of veterans, having captured the battery, was engaged in fierce conflict with a body of infantry. Now from all sides our friends were hurrying up, and the Austrians, overwhelmed by numbers, fled over the Tapio River towards Koka, where they sheltered behind the sand-hills. As for us, we halted on the ground it had cost us so dear to win; and the colonel immediately sent me to collect the runaways from the regiment, and bring them back.

This I did with exceeding difficulty, as the whole of Klapka's corps was in a terrible state of confusion. Then, with Dobozy and half a dozen soldiers, I proceeded to search for the body of the hapless Thurzo.

I picked up the sword which had dropped from the nerveless fingers, while Dobozy cut a curl from the dead lad's raven hair.

"For his mother," he said softly, not attempting to hide the tears that gathered in his eyes. "He was her only son, and she is a widow."

The men carried the body to a small wood nearly half a mile away, and there, with the sweet-smelling pines swaying mournfully overhead, we buried him, marking the place by a rude cross.

"It will comfort *her*, when the war is ended, to come and pray beside it," said Dobozy, as we turned sorrowfully toward the spot where our regiment was stationed.

We were not very cheerful in camp that night. We were tired out with marching and fighting, saddened by the loss of many brave companions, while the shame of that morning's rout hung over us like a pall.

True, the Austrians had finally been repulsed; but the credit of that was not ours. That belonged to Görgei and the veterans of the second division.

The runaways were sulky and ashamed; the officers--some of whom had been literally carried off by the crowd of fugitives--were furiously angry.

For myself, I was on fatigue duty till a late hour, and Dobozy volunteered to help me: hard work would divert his mind somewhat from dwelling on the death of his comrade.

It was nearly midnight when we rejoined our brother-officers, who,

wrapped in their mantles, lay in a ring on the ground. Some had forgotten the disaster in sleep, others were still chatting quietly over the events of the day.

Rakoczy was absent; he had been sent for by the chief, who wished to consult him, or more likely, perhaps, to give him some orders for the morning.

Dobozy and I lay down side by side, wrapped ourselves in our mantles, and tried to snatch an hour or two's sleep.

In this my companion happily succeeded, but I was less fortunate, being weighed down by a sense of uneasiness as to my brother's fate.

After that momentary glimpse of him riding at the head of the hussars, he had vanished, and no one seemed to know what had become of him.

True, he might have rejoined Görgei, and been sent with a message to Aulich; but the general gloom of the day made me nervous and fanciful, and I lay awake until Rakoczy returned.

"Stephen?" he said, in answer to my anxious questioning. "No, I certainly didn't see him; but what of that? Görgei's *aides* flit about like ghosts in a stage-play. They aren't supposed to be like ordinary mortals, who want food and rest. Cheer up, my boy; I really don't think there's any reason to worry. If Stephen had come to grief, Görgei would have known and told me, you may be sure. Clear your head of these notions, and go to sleep. We're likely to have a hard day to-morrow."

This was sensible advice, and I tried to act on it; but after all, I must confess, there was little sleep for me that night.

CHAPTER XII.

A SORROWFUL VICTORY.

"Conquer to-day, or back behind the Theiss! Such is the alternative; I know of no other. Damjanics still continues the battle. Aulich advances; Klapka has stopped his retreat. Forward! We *must* conquer!"

These were the words which greeted us from our brave chief, when once again we stood in battle array, and they warmed our blood like a draught of generous wine.

I understood little of the general's plans, except that at all costs he purposed keeping Jellachich and the Austrians apart.

On the extreme left, Aulich and a part of the second division advanced through a spur of the Isaszeg forest; in the centre our cavalry and artillery had gathered; we of Klapka's corps, with a small part of the second division, occupied the most northern spur of all.

As we reached our positions, Görgei rode down, attended by his brilliant staff.

I looked eagerly for Stephen, and my heart sank when I saw he was not there.

Görgei was no orator like Kossuth. As a rule he spoke with his sword, and very clearly did he make himself understood.

This morning he treated us to a little harangue. It was not long, but very effective.

"My lads!" he said, and his voice rang out like a trumpet-call, "there is only one thing I ask you to do--stand where you are till the sun goes down. Will you do it?"

Like one man, the broken remnant of Klapka's corps shouted their answer; and the general, whose face beamed with pleasure, rode off amidst enthusiastic cries of "Elijen Görgei!"

In the centre, a part of the forest had burst into flames, and the wind, blowing from the south, spread the smoke over our right like a curtain.

At times it was so thick we could neither see nor be seen. Again it would lift, and reveal to our straining eyes some portion of the battle.

The artillery duel in the centre proceeded with the utmost vigour, but it seemed to us that the Austrian fire gradually grew weaker and slacker. Two tremendous explosions, one after the other, announced the blowing up of a considerable quantity of ammunition, and for a while the fire ceased.

Aulich's corps was by this time hidden from view in the forest, but by the sound of his light guns we could tell he was making uninterrupted progress.

Thus far we ourselves were merely spectators of the battle, but now several infantry regiments appeared on our right, and poured a destructive fire into our ranks.

We paid back what we could of their favours; but they had the advantage of us, and Klapka had just given orders to turn them out when they themselves rushed forward to the charge.

The onslaught was sudden and violent, but the Magyars, burning to atone for yesterday's panic, actually left the shelter of the trees in order to engage their enemy the sooner.

So eager, indeed, were the 9th Honveds that they got entirely out of hand, and having defeated a body of the enemy, chased them much farther than was prudent.

A well-directed cavalry charge would at this moment have cut the regiment in pieces.

As it happened, Klapka's men were successful all along the line, which helped us to return without mishap.

The tremendous cannonade in the centre, which had partly died away, now broke out afresh. The wind, veering again, swept the smoke from the burning forest right across our position, shrouding us completely.

When next we were able to catch a glimpse of the battle, our men raised a loud cheer and flourished their rifles excitedly, to the great danger both of themselves and their comrades.

Far in advance of us, and on our left, the soldiers of Aulich's division were pushing the Austrians before them, and thus far Görgei's plans had proved a success.

At this sight our own opponents made a desperate effort to drive us from the spur of the forest which we held, and for a while longer the fight raged with great fury.

Görgei's words, however, still rang in our ears, and not a man made a backward step.

About this time my anxiety concerning Stephen was relieved. The general, seeing what tremendous efforts the enemy made to roll us back, rode up to give us some little encouragement, and amongst his staff I saw my brother, apparently unhurt, but looking very tired.

Stephen gave me a bright nod as the general cantered along, praising the men, bidding them hold out a little longer, and assuring us all that the battle was practically won.

Görgei had hardly gone when our opponents rallied for a final attack.

It was growing dusk by now, and we felt sure that everything in our part of the field depended on the next half-hour.

An Austrian success would wipe out all the advantage Aulich had obtained; while if we stood firm, the enemy must retire in every part of the field.

The part to be played by the 9th Honveds was very simple, yet I must admit we did not like it. A shadow of annoyance passed over even Rakoczy's face when the order was brought from Klapka.

Every man in the regiment burned to advance, instead of which we had to stand still and supply a steady target for the enemy's fire.

Fortunately the attack did not last long. The other regiments, turning on us as on a pivot, swung round in a flanking movement, and presently the Hungarian cry of "Forward! forward!" told that our comrades were driving the enemy before them.

"Now," exclaimed our colonel genially, "if Aulich has taken Isaszeg, the affair

is over."

But had he? No one could tell. His corps had vanished completely, and the fast-approaching night swallowed everything in gloom.

Two hours longer we stood to our arms, ready at any moment either to advance or to repel any fresh attack.

It was dreary work waiting, and the men were so tired that many fell asleep while standing in the ranks.

Suddenly there rose a sound of cheering, a vigorous "Elijen Görgei! Elijen Aulich!" and the welcome news flashed from regiment to regiment, from man to man, that Aulich had chased the Austrians out of Isaszeg.

The knowledge of this success made new men of us. We forgot our fatigue, and lay half through the night joyfully discussing the probable results of the battle.

Every one agreed that the Austrians would now be compelled to fall back on Pesth. Very few, if any, suspected that from our victory was to spring the ruin of the national cause.

Görgei was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet, and the next day Klapka and Damjanics received orders to march on Waitzen, the town standing on the bend where the Danube sweeps round to the south, while one corps remained behind to hoodwink Windischgratz.

Nothing of interest occurred during the march, and we reached Waitzen on the morning of April 9 without having met a sign of the enemy.

The town was unfortified; but the Austrian general, Gatz, commanding two brigades, had resolved upon a vigorous defence, as we soon found.

The 9th Honveds formed part of the vanguard, and after a sharp struggle we succeeded in forcing a way into the streets.

Here our progress was instantly checked. The old-fashioned lane in which we found ourselves was so narrow that the inmates of the houses, by leaning out of window, could almost shake hands with their opposite neighbours.

Across this lane three barricades had been constructed in such a manner that, while the second commanded the first, the third overawed both.

Carried away by what was, perhaps, a natural impulse, the men, without waiting for orders, rushed at the nearest barrier, and were mowed down in scores.

I suppose it is the sense of being shut up in a corner, with little chance of escape, that makes street fighting so savage. Certainly I have never seen so furious a conflict in the open field as behind the barricades in Waitzen.

From the shouts and cries of the combatants, and the firing of guns, we recognized that our comrades were fighting their way, step by step, in other directions, and I for one hoped some of them would come to our assistance by taking the barricades in the rear.

The attack having failed, the men came dropping back in disorder, being

exposed not only to the fire from the barrier, but also from the windows of the houses, which were garrisoned by soldiers.

Meanwhile, the pressure behind being relieved, the colonel rallied the regiment into something like order again.

"It's no use trying for the barricade like that, my lads," he exclaimed cheerfully; "we're only knocking our heads against a stone wall. What we have to do is to clear the houses one by one."

This was really the only workmanlike way of doing the business, though it added much to the horrors of the combat.

The Austrians inside the buildings forced us to fight for every room in each house. They made a barricade of every article of furniture, and a fortress of every staircase. While we fought those below, their comrades in the upper stories picked us off with their rifles; and when their ammunition was exhausted they clambered over to the next house, or dropped into the street.

In this fashion we worked our way to the buildings overlooking the first barricade, which now became useless, and was immediately abandoned.

The last man to leave was their leader, and at sight of him my heart beat fast.

He stood on the barricade, coolly directing the movements of his men, while the bullets fell round him like hailstones.

In one hand was his sword; in the other he carried the black and yellow flag of his country.

He did not seem in any kind of hurry, but waited patiently till the soldiers had entered the houses; then, and not till then, he left his post.

He had not seen me; but I recognized him at once, and trembled for his safety.

I had never met this noble veteran since leaving Vienna, and had hoped the war might end without our coming face to face. How could I ever look into the pretty fräulein's eyes again if by any chance my sword should cross that of her father's?

For this Austrian leader, whose bravery even the Magyars applauded, was Baron von Arnstein, and it was plain he would yield that narrow passage only with his life.

Happily, perhaps, I had little leisure for thinking. The first barricade being down, the fight continued with redoubled fury.

And now, adding new horror to the scene, fire broke out; and by the time we had fought our way to the second barricade, it was necessary for both sides to abandon the houses.

The third barrier must be taken by a rush along the narrow lane, or not at all.

By this time the regiment had lost half its strength. Both the majors were down--dead or wounded, we knew not which--and many other officers; but the survivors, instead of being cowed by this great loss, were only the more eager to go on.

So, in the midst of the smoke and the flames from the burning houses, we took our lives in our hands and ran, Rakoczy leading.

"Forward!" he cried. "Forward!" echoed the Honveds, and a spectator would have thought our fierce rush alone must have swept the Austrians into eternity.

But on the barricade, still grasping the black and yellow flag, there stood a man to whom fear was an unknown quantity, and whose one idea was to do the duty entrusted to him.

I watched him with the keenest interest as he collected his forces to withstand the shock.

Rakoczy saw him too, and his genial brow clouded. It grieved him sorely to think he must fight against his old acquaintance; but, like the Austrian baron, the Magyar had a duty to perform, and there was no trace of faltering in his voice as he urged his men to the assault.

The next moment the white-coats poured in their volley. Many of our fellows dropped, Rakoczy amongst them. The rest of us rushed on wildly, to be stopped by a second volley more destructive than the first.

Then some one shouted lustily that the colonel was dead; and the Honveds, with victory within their grasp, ran back, while the enemy cheered exultingly.

Sad at heart, I returned to the spot where my gallant friend had fallen and, with the help of Mecsey Sándor, who followed me everywhere like a shadow, bore his body back.

It was terrible to think I had not time even to find out if he were really dead!

We laid him down reverently, and I immediately began to re-form the broken regiment; for so fierce had been the fighting, that of the officers able to enter action I was the senior.

Very gladly I would have yielded the honour and responsibility to another; but as that could not be, I resolved to do my best.

"Will you follow me, my lads?" I cried, when we were again ready.

"We will!" they answered, with a shout.

"Then come on! Over the barricade this time!"

It is curious how a phrase, or sometimes even a word, will work on a number of men acting together.

There is nothing very striking in "Over the barricade this time!" yet the words were caught up by the soldiers, repeated again and again, and more than one man died with them on his lips.

They sounded high and clear above the noise of the first volley, and as we

pressed on the wounded sent them after us feebly.

I really believe they kept us going after the next volley fired at close range, and certainly they were roared out most lustily as the first of the stormers appeared on the stronghold.

It was Dobozy carrying the colours; but he missed his footing and fell down, half stunned, but otherwise unhurt.

A little, muscular fellow picked up the fallen flag, and sprang with it to my side, while the others rushed pell-mell after us.

I had purposely avoided Von Arnstein, who was to the right of me; but, like a true leader, he soon scented where the danger was greatest, and cut a way to that part of his stronghold where the red, white, and green proudly waved.

Twice we went back to the very edge of the barrier, and once the colours were snatched from our grasp by a grizzled veteran, who laughed defiantly as a Magyar cut him down.

To right and left of us the flames of the burning buildings threw a lurid glare on the scene, and some one excitedly shouted that the barricade was on fire.

We heard the shout, but it had no effect on the fighting. It did not prevent a blow being struck, nor cause the foot of Magyar or Austrian to move an inch backward.

We had gripped one another, as it were, by the throat, and hung there like bulldogs.

When I look back at that terrible fight, I find the picture for the most part blurred and indistinct; but there is just one tiny part of it whose colour is vivid and its drawing bold.

It will always be so, I suppose, though I do not care to see it.

Over and over again I had gone out of my way to avoid the gallant leader, had plunged with foolhardy recklessness into the greatest dangers, and he had followed my steps with strange persistence.

I do not think he had a moment's suspicion who I was until at last the chances of the fight brought us face to face.

That is the one corner of the picture where the colours have not faded. All around is a blur; but two figures stand out lifelike.

One is that of a youth with torn uniform, his smoke-begrimed features working with excitement, his sword held in the most awkward manner either for attack or defence.

The other is the figure of an old man, his breast covered with medals and decorations, of commanding carriage, and with a proud look in his keen blue eyes.

Close by, my fancy paints the face of a beautiful girl gazing mournfully at the youth and the old man--the Magyar and the Austrian.

I know it is not really there, yet I see it as plainly as I did on that terrible

day in the years gone by.

The tide had at last turned in our favour; the Austrians were yielding slowly, when their leader made his final effort. Cheered by his voice, they rallied once more, and then it was we met.

The look which flashed from his eyes to mine occupied the merest fraction of a second, yet I shall never forget it.

I read there astonishment and sorrow, then a certain hardness, as if the brave old warrior were calling duty to his aid.

With him the struggle ended, and the soldier, not the friend, gained the victory.

I saw his determination quite plainly, and yet could not bring myself to parry the blow. Who could tell what might happen if once our swords crossed?

Theresa was looking into my eyes, and, as I lowered my weapon, she smiled upon me approvingly and vanished.

Perhaps the baron would have drawn back; but he was in the very act of delivering his stroke, and I nerved myself to meet it.

The sword shone red in the glow of the flames; but before it descended another piece of steel flashed past me, and pierced the baron's chest.

Mecsey Sándor had no scruples in killing any one to save his master's life, which the faithful fellow undoubtedly had done.

At the fall of their chief the Austrians abandoned the position, upon which I ordered the regiment to fall in a little beyond the burning houses.

Just then a man clapped me lightly on the shoulder, saying, "Thanks, George!" and, turning, I beheld the colonel.

The men recognized him too, and broke into hearty cheering.

"We have suffered so severely," I said, "that I stopped the pursuit."

"Quite right. Let others follow; we must see to the wounded, or they will be burned to death. The barricade's in a blaze, and--"

"The baron!" I exclaimed. "He lies there, dead or dangerously wounded. Let me have some men."

"As many as you please. Dobozy--"

I hurried off at once, and, selecting a score of fellows, ran to the barrier, which appeared to be enveloped in flames. True, it was not quite as bad as that, but we had barely time to remove the injured and some of the dead when the whole pile fell in with a crash, and the heavens were reddened by a broad sheet of flame.

I found Von Arnstein just where he had fallen, and had him carried to a house some distance off, where I went, immediately the work of rescue was finished.

Our comrades had been equally successful in other parts of the town, and

Waitzen was in our hands, though we had paid a heavier price for it than was reckoned on.

In a state of utter dejection I entered the room where the baron lay on a bed, and it scarcely needed the surgeon's significant gesture to kill the tiny germ of hope in my breast. I crossed the room with noiseless steps and looked at the dying man.

The surgeon had cut away a part of his coat and shirt, the more easily to get at the wound, but a glance showed even to me that all his skill was vain.

Mecsey Sándor's arm was strong, and in defence of his master he had struck with all his might.

The veteran's face was bloodless, but he lay quite still, and I rejoiced to think he suffered little pain.

As I bent over him his eyes opened, and he gazed at me languidly, but without a sign of recognition.

"Baron," I said softly, "don't you know me, George Botskay, the young Hungarian you saved from prison? I was once able to do a little service for your daughter."

How much of this he understood I cannot say, but the last word certainly made an impression, for a happy smile lit up his wan face, and he murmured to himself what sounded like "Tessie."

This I took to be an endearing name for his daughter.

His strength was soon exhausted, his eyes closed again, and I thought he was dead.

"No," said the surgeon, "he will rally at the end; it cannot be far off."

"An hour?"

"More likely two. He is a strong man, or he would have gone before this."

Borrowing a piece of paper from the owner of the house, I wrote a note to Rakoczy, requesting leave to stay with the baron, and sent it by a soldier. Then I sat down by the bedside to wait for the end.

CHAPTER XIII.

A VISIT FROM STEPHEN.

The surgeon, who could do nothing further, slipped out quietly, asking as he went if he should send any one to bear me company.

I shook my head, preferring to keep that solemn watch alone.

In truth, my heart was exceedingly sad both for the dying man and for his dear ones in Vienna, who would await his return in vain.

The manner of his death also sorely grieved me. Certainly my hand had not struck him down, but Sándor had slain him to save my life.

It was foolish, perhaps, to dwell on the thought, but I could not thrust it out. I felt that but for me the baron would still have been at the head of his regiment.

The house was very still, and even the noises from the captured town failed to reach me.

The fires in the street had been extinguished, but now the glowing crimson of the setting sun flooded the room, and as its light fell athwart the bed the dying man moved restlessly.

"Let it burn!" he muttered. "All the better for us. Ready? Mind your aim! Fire!"

His eyes were wide open, gazing with intense keenness across the room.

"Ach!" he continued. "They have it now! Who? The colonel? That will stop them! Sorry--knew him--Vienna. What? Again? Steady now! Here they come!"

His brow was wet with perspiration, and, as I bent over to wipe it off, the dying glory of the sun shone full into my face.

At this the baron's excitement increased, and he muttered to himself at a great rate, while I, dipping a rag in water, bathed his forehead continually.

By degrees he became calmer; the wild light died from his eyes; he ceased to mutter, and presently looked into my face with a reasoning though puzzled expression.

"George Botskay," I said, trying to help his memory. "Don't you know? You stood my friend in Vienna."

He smiled faintly, but with intelligence, and, moving his hand, pointed to the window, as if wishing to direct my attention to something outside.

"The barricade?" I ventured questioningly.

He smiled again and dropped his hand in mine.

"Good lad," he murmured; "I saw and understood--afterwards."

"I am sorry," I began; but he checked me, saying,--

"A soldier's death, my boy. That is best--for me."

He was getting very weak now, and I heard him with great difficulty.

Some words I did not hear at all, and others only imperfectly; but I managed to understand what he wished done, and promised to do it.

His requests, poor fellow, were very simple. He desired only that the miniature of his wife, which hung round his neck, should be given to Theresa, and his

massive wedding-ring to the baroness.

As I gently drew the latter from his finger, his mind wandered once more, and he talked to himself of bygone days and events of which I knew nothing.

From the delights of peace he passed to the horrors of the battlefield, and then right back to the time of his childhood, when he was a happy, careless boy at his mother's side.

Here he ended, and, rather to my surprise, just as the last gleam of the setting sun faded, he died with the sacred name of "mother" on his lips.

Taking a long look at the face now so calm and still, I covered it reverently, and went away on tiptoe, as if the noise of my footsteps could disturb the dead.

Outside I met the colonel, and returned with him to the room.

"Poor fellow!" he exclaimed, after gazing a moment at the white face. "What a blow for the pretty fräulein! I'll warrant he made an idol of her. War's an awful thing, George, when you come to strip the gilding off. I would not like to have the responsibility of one on my shoulders, though I'm a soldier born and bred. How many thousands of widows and orphans are cursing us at this very moment! Well, well; we must give the baron a decent funeral in the morning," and he led me away.

The town seemed very quiet after the tremendous uproar of the day.

The fires had been put out; the Austrians were in retreat; and our army was chasing them into that very mountain district where Görgei had led us in January.

Our own regiment, having suffered so severely, was left behind, and I really felt glad of the change.

The colonel had taken up his quarters in a decent house, and there at supper we were joined by the surviving officers of the regiment.

Several of the absentees were dead, but the majority were in hospital, and, though badly wounded, expected to recover.

"Just like our luck!" said the colonel, as we sat chatting over what had happened. "We took the very strongest street in the town. The other fellows had a pleasure jaunt, compared with our march."

"Who was the Austrian officer?" asked a sublieutenant. "I hope he escaped; he was a splendid chap."

"That was Baron von Arnstein," the colonel replied. "I'm sorry to say he was killed. I mean to bury him to-morrow with military honours."

"He deserves all the respect we can show him," Dobozy chimed in.

"There's one thing puzzles me, colonel," I said, "and that is, how you escaped. I saw you fall, and thought you were dead."

For the first time that night Rakoczy's face lit up with his genial smile.

"I carry a bullet-catcher," he answered pleasantly; and taking a massive gold watch from his breast-pocket, he handed it to me.

"They've spoiled it as a time-keeper," he continued, "but it will come in as a

curiosity."

The watch had a double cover, and was enclosed in a bag of thick chamois leather, a part of which had been forced into the case by the impact of the bullet.

The case itself was badly battered and the works smashed.

I passed it to the other fellows, who examined it in profound astonishment and warmly congratulated the colonel on his marvellous escape.

"Yes," said he brightly; "but for that watch Görgei might have looked for a new colonel."

"We prefer to keep our old one, though he does wear a watch that won't tell the time," I remarked.

Dobozy asked if it could be mended, but the colonel said he preferred keeping it as it was, which I certainly should have done.

We did not sit long, having to rise early; and in the morning, as soon as it could be managed, Rakoczy turned out the regiment to pay the last honours to our valiant opponent.

We buried him in the Catholic cemetery, where I made arrangements for a handsome stone to be erected in his memory. It stands there to this day.

When all was over, the men marched back to the strains of martial music, while I felt as sorrowful as if we had been assisting to bury a valued friend.

Fortunately, a soldier on active service has little leisure in which to indulge his grief, and thus it was with me now.

So greatly had the regiment lost in officers that the survivors were compelled to do more than double duty, and for several days I had not an hour to myself.

One event, though not exactly bearing on my story, must be chronicled, since it shows the generosity of Görgei's nature.

During the fierce fighting on the ninth of April the Austrian general, Gatz, had fallen while at the head of his men, and our chief, anxious to honour the memory of a gallant adversary, did on a large scale what we had done for Von Arnstein, and accorded him a magnificent military funeral.

The display was of a most imposing description, and when the body of the brave Austrian had been laid to rest, the ceremony was concluded by the discharge of a hundred guns.

Meanwhile, grave events were taking place. Just as the battle of Isaszeg had cut off the Austrian right wing, so now their left was completely broken up, and it became plain that Windischgratz must evacuate Pesth.

"Another stroke like the last," said Rakoczy one evening as we sat chatting in his room, "and the thing will be done."

"Unless Kossuth's party should try to drive too hard a bargain."

"Oh no," replied the colonel cheerfully. "The Austrians know exactly what

we want. The emperor has only to be crowned King of Hungary, and swear to restore our ancient rights. He will do that as soon as our army appears under the walls of Vienna."

"It isn't much, especially when--"

A loud banging at the door cut the sentence short, and in walked my brother, looking flushed and excited.

Neither of us had seen him since the meeting at Isaszeg, and we had not the faintest notion he was in Waitzen.

He shook hands with us warmly, drank a glass of wine which Rakoczy poured out, and sat down.

"Care to turn in?" asked the colonel. "My bed's doing nothing, and you look tired."

Stephen shook his head. "I'm off in a couple of hours; only waiting to rest my horse."

"There's nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing wrong!" exclaimed my brother. "Everything's wrong! Haven't you heard the news from Debreczin? Here, read this!" and he drew a printed paper from his pocket.

The colonel spread it on the table, and as he read the contents aloud I began to understand the meaning of Stephen's words.

The document, signed by the members of the National Diet, proclaimed in vigorous language the independence of Hungary. The House of Hapsburg-Lorraine was deposed, its members banished from the country, and Hungary, as a free state, was to be governed by Kossuth.

"What do you think of it?" asked Stephen testily, as if we had drawn up the proclamation.

"'Twould be rather more to the point to know what Görgei thinks of it," the colonel replied in his cool way. "I suppose he wasn't consulted over this--waste paper?"

"Yes he was, and went dead against it. Kossuth came to Godolo, and there was a very stormy meeting, I can tell you."

"What did Görgei say?"

"That we didn't want a republic, and wouldn't have one. That our soldiers were royalists, and in arms to defend the constitution--not to depose the king. In short, that Kossuth's scheme would plunge the country into misery."

"It means a Russian invasion," remarked Rakoczy. "It means the loss of all the Sclavonic states, and Hungary dragooned into another Poland."

My brother tossed his head contemptuously. "We would chance all that," he said. "A Magyar doesn't stop to count the odds against him; but we aren't going to spill blood like water, just to make Kossuth dictator!"

"We can't draw back now," I said.

"That's just it. We must either continue fighting, or desert our country when it has the greatest need of us."

"Stuff!" said Stephen. "Were I Görgei, I would settle the matter in a month."

Rakoczy bubbled over with laughter; but, seeing how much in earnest my brother was, he tried hard to keep a straight face, and asked how he proposed to do it.

"It's very simple," Stephen replied. "The army is devoted to Görgei, and will do what he wishes. Let him swoop down on the Austrians, win another battle--which would be easy enough--and then offer to close the war, on condition that our ancient rights are restored."

"And what of this?" I asked, laying my hand on the declaration of independence.

"Pooh! It will be useful to the people for wrapping up parcels."

"I believe the plan would work out all right," said Rakoczy thoughtfully, "but we mustn't try it. Don't you see, my boy, that it would open a civil war, and we should have to join the Austrians in crushing our own people. No, no. Rather let Hungary become an Austrian fief than that Magyar should destroy Magyar."

"The other side doesn't study that."

"All the more reason why we should. How would you like to help the Austrians burn down Pesth, because Louis Kossuth was inside it?"

Stephen turned away with a shudder. "It seems that we must tie our own hands," he remarked gloomily.

"You've hit it exactly; but we can untie them to fight against the enemy. By the way, our acquaintance, Baron von Arnstein, is dead."

"I'm sorry to hear that. What a blow to his pretty daughter!"

"And to the baroness. But come; in the general excitement I quite forgot to ask you to eat," and the colonel ordered supper to be laid immediately.

We had barely finished when a clatter of hoofs was heard outside, and a soldier brought word that Captain Botskay's horses were ready.

"Then I must go," exclaimed my brother, "though that wretched paper has taken the heart out of my work."

"Yes," said the colonel, after he had gone. "This precious document will work the cause more harm than the loss of a dozen battles."

Now I would not have you suppose we bore any ill-will to Louis Kossuth and his party; but we did not belong to them, their aims were not ours, and, in addition, we believed they were grasping at more than they were able to hold.

Of Kossuth's genius and marvellous eloquence, of his untiring energy, his passionate love for Hungary and hatred to Austria, I have already spoken.

He caused the raw material of armies to start from the soil; he created

money, manufactured guns, turned the ploughshares into swords and bayonets, stored ammunition, roused the people to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, and was, in short, the mainspring of the revolution amongst the civilians.

He did not profess to be a soldier, and the taunts that he never appeared on the battle-field, except to run away, I held to be both unjust and ungenerous. His place was at the council chamber, not in the camp. Whether he was ambitious for himself, I know not; and it matters little, as the gulf between us was so vast that it could not be bridged.

We, the party of the nobles and most of the old soldiers in Görgei's army, wished only to regain our ancient rights. Kossuth and his friends openly endeavoured to make Hungary into a republic. In the days of our adversity the little rift was not seen; now it suddenly became a yawning chasm.

From the general to the private arose murmurs of discontent, and I verily believe that, had Görgei done what my brother proposed, he would have carried the army with him to a man.

Some even to this day blame him for not exerting his strength at the critical moment; but when I think of the awful misery which must have followed, I am glad that he acted as he did. Each day now brought us news of some further success. Everywhere the Austrians fell back, until at length we heard that our centre had entered Pesth, which the enemy had evacuated on the previous day.

Much to our surprise, there came with this information an order for the 9th Honveds to fall back on the capital.

Rakoczy, of course, instantly set about obeying, but he was obviously ill at ease, as Görgei was still chasing the flying Austrians to Presburg.

"It seems to me we ought to march forward to Vienna, not back to Pesth," he exclaimed.

I pointed out that the Austrians had probably left a garrison in Buda.

"Well? What of it?" he asked. "You don't suppose we're going to waste precious time there, while the imperialists rally? Why, all we have to do now is to keep them running till they reach Vienna. I really thought you were a better soldier than that, George."

"I daresay you will find me up to the government standard," I replied, laughing at the wry face he made.

Several of the officers and many of the men were by this time fit to resume duty, but numerous familiar faces were still missing when the regiment started on its way to Pesth.

We found the capital filled with citizens and soldiers in a state of high glee. Now that the Austrians had really disappeared, they thought that the war was over and done with.

Our regiment, which received quite an ovation from the crowd, was quar-

tered in the barracks, and during several days we had leisure to roam about the bright and beautiful city.

The red, white, and green stripes fluttered proudly from the tops of the magnificent palaces. Nobles and ladies rode by in handsome carriages drawn by fine Hungarian horses. The streets were crowded by soldiers in uniform and citizens dressed in the national costume. Every one was in the highest spirits and the utmost good-humour.

One blot existed on the pleasant scene--the black and yellow flag floating from the Buda fortress (on the other side of the river), which sheltered General Hentzi with 3,000 veterans and 90 guns; but for the moment it was ignored.

"What a magnificent spectacle!" exclaimed Rakoczy, as we strolled one morning along the river embankments, and gazed at the blue waters of the mighty Danube. "I sometimes think there can scarcely be a finer sight in the world than the twin cities present. Look at the Blocksberg on the other side of the river."

"A fine place to batter the fortress from," I said.

"Oh! let us forget the war a bit; we shall soon be in harness again."

"Very well. We'll talk about the feats of civilization. There's a fine example!" and I pointed to that triumph of engineering skill, the noble suspension bridge built by an Englishman named Clarke; it joins the two cities by spanning the river.

I had rarely seen my friend so strangely moved. His face became quite sad, his eyes were dim, and when he spoke his voice was husky.

"Hungary owes that, as she owes almost everything else in modern years, to as true a patriot as ever lived," he said softly. "You did not know Count Stephen Szechenyi?"

"Only by repute," I answered.

"No; his best work was done before your time. He was Hungary's great man, George. Kossuth, Batthiany, and Görgei have simply entered into the fruits of his labour. He built the foundations sure, and firm, and strong. It was in '25 that he rose in the Diet, and addressed the assembly in the Magyar tongue; till then the debates had been conducted in Latin. He toiled early and late, in season and out of season. He gave his fortune, his brains, his leisure, to his country; even his reason was sacrificed; and now, a broken and helpless wreck, he is an inmate of an Austrian lunatic asylum. Patriot and martyr, he has been cast aside like a broken reed. The people have a fresh hero now--one who can tickle their fancies and flatter their vanity by his burning eloquence--a brand-new hero, my boy. Let the old one go rot."

We walked on a little way in silence, and then with his usual cheery smile my companion added,--

"The fit doesn't come often, and is soon over, but it's hot while it lasts. Really,

though, when I think of Count Stephen's ruined life, and how he was tossed aside at last, I feel awfully wild. Now let us turn back; there's still time for a stroll in the town before we are due at the barracks. Hallo! there's Count Beula. Pass him with a nod if you can; I don't like that fellow."

However, the count, whom we had not seen since the revolt in Vienna, had no mind that we should pass unrecognized.

He was dressed in the uniform of a staff officer, and walked with a military swagger that was not without a certain grace.

At first he affected astonishment at seeing us in the Honved uniform, saying he thought we had joined the Austrians. Then he congratulated us on the declaration of independence, and hoped we should have a part in the capture of Buda.

All this he spoke in the smoothest tones, choosing his words so that they might wound and yet afford no handle for offence, smiling when he hurt us most, pretending he thought we were pleased, and inquiring for Stephen, whom he hated, as if the two were the closest friends.

I, being young, could not conceal my annoyance; but Rakoczy gave the count smile for smile, jest for jest, praise of Kossuth in return for praise of Görgei, and, in fact, as the French say, a Roland for his Oliver every time.

"A clever, smooth-tongued rascal," exclaimed he, when at length the count took himself off. "I wonder where he has been."

"At Debreczin, most likely; he's just the sort of man to do his soldiering in the drawing-room."

"I'm not so sure of that. A boaster isn't always a coward. Did you hear what he said about the taking of Buda?"

"Yes."

"That comes from Kossuth, you may depend; and if so, all is lost."

"Unless Görgei interferes."

"Ah!" said the colonel, "he loves his country too much for that," and we walked on without further conversation.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE QUARREL WITH COUNT BEULA.

One result of the declaration of independence was an inrush of foreigners: Poles, Germans, French, Italians swarmed into the country on all sides.

These men were all red-hot republicans, and, except the Poles, fought not so much out of love to Hungary as from hatred to the Austrian government.

Naturally they helped to swell Kossuth's party, and talked loudly of maintaining the struggle till Hungary was acknowledged an independent republic; while some, going still farther, demanded that the Russians should be expelled from Poland, and the two countries joined together.

At first, however, the real dispute centered on the next step in the war. Görgei, who had returned to Pesth, pointed out that by staying to capture Buda we should lose our only opportunity of crushing the Austrians while they were still weak and feeble.

Kossuth, on the other hand, had resolved that Buda should first fall; and at length the general reluctantly yielded.

It was a great mistake, and we of the army felt it to be such; but a soldier's duty is to obey, and not to question.

Amongst ourselves and in the city we talked hotly enough, and many passionate words were spoken in the heat of anger.

On our side, none were so furious as Stephen, who had come to Pesth with his chief.

He expressed his opinions freely, gaining thereby no love from the foreigners, and openly boasted that he would not be chained to the triumphal car of Louis Kossuth.

Several times I begged him to moderate his language; but he only laughed, saying that, now Kossuth had made Hungary free, there was no need for him to be silent.

I was the more amazed at my brother's behaviour, because it was so much out of harmony with his real character; but there seemed to be a kind of spell on him, which he was unable to shake off.

One evening he was holding forth to Rakoczy, myself, and several others in a restaurant, when Count Beula entered with some friends.

The count nodded to us all very politely, and, seating himself at the next table, ordered wine for his company.

Whether the man really meant to create a disturbance or not I cannot say, but, filling his glass, he cried, "Here's to the Hungarian republic!"

His friends drank their wine and applauded boisterously, while Stephen, springing to his feet, exclaimed in ringing tones,--

"Gentlemen, this is a free country. Let us drink our own toast, 'Hungary and the constitution of '48!'"

"Bravo!" I said, feeling compelled to back him up, though not desiring a

quarrel. "That is what we are fighting for."

"And more than we shall get," added the colonel good-humouredly.

"Thanks to Kossuth's meddling!" said Stephen. "If he had left the general alone, we should be over the frontier by now."

"The young man carries messages for Görgei," the count explained to his associates in a tone of amusement. "That is how he comes to know so much about fighting."

"Even that gives more training than talking rubbish in a back room," I put in hotly, thinking of the scene at Vienna.

"Perhaps the count has come out of his shell since then," said Rakoczy, with a merry twinkle.

"It must have been to get into a safer one," exclaimed Stephen contemptuously.

The quarrel, like a fire, once started, blazed furiously, and but for a shaggy-haired German, we should speedily have come to blows.

He was puffing vigorously at a tremendous pipe, and, coming through the dense volume of smoke, his voice sounded like a fog-horn.

"Ach!" he grunted, "the quarrel is stupid; let it rest. The count has made his reputation with General Bern; he can afford to laugh. As for the boys, they seem very nice boys--ach!" and the oracle faded behind a cloud of smoke of his own construction. This was like a douche of cold water on the fire; but though the flames were put out, the embers smouldered, and presently sprang into a fresh blaze.

I hardly know how it happened, but the conversation once more turned upon the siege of Buda, and Stephen maintained, quite rightly, as after events proved, that even a successful assault must be attended by immense slaughter.

"The boy speaks sense there!" growled the smoke-hidden Teuton. "I know Hentzi well; he's just the man to strike hard and to strike often."

"Well, well. Our young friend need not be afraid," broke in the count sneeringly. "We shall find men stout-hearted enough to storm the breach when it's made."

"I do not fear for myself," Stephen answered proudly.

"No, no," said the count, laughing insolently. "It isn't likely, since you won't be there till the danger's over. Most men are brave enough when they haven't to do the fighting."

"Perhaps," said I quickly, stopping an angry outburst from Stephen, "that accounts for your coolness."

"A good thrust, my boy," said the benevolent Teuton.--"Count, he had you there."

Count Beula laughed again, showing his white teeth, refilled his glass, and

answered brightly, "The thrust was parried before it was delivered. I have already been named as the leader of one of the storming parties whenever a breach is practicable. Kossuth's friends fight as well as talk."

"They do more than their leader then," said Dobozy, who formed one of our party.

The count's statement fell on me like a thunderbolt. I had thought him an arrogant, conceited fellow, having nothing of the soldier about him but his uniform and his swagger, yet here he spoke calmly of leading a forlorn hope.

He saw his triumph, and glanced at us, but particularly at Stephen, with an insolent patronage for which I could have kicked him.

"Oh no," he said loftily, in answer to a remark from a companion; "I take no merit for it. The opportunity offered, and I accepted--nothing more. Of course our young friend has his fixed duties, otherwise we might have seen him at the breach."

The words were simple and harmless, but the sneer was so open that it could not be mistaken, and my brother's face flushed crimson. "And so you shall," he cried hotly. "I cannot claim so high an honour as Count Beula, but I can and will enter the fortress as soon as he."

The count smiled, drained his glass, rose to go, and then, looking round at the company, said pleasantly, "A challenge before so many witnesses must be accepted; but"--maliciously--"perhaps before Görgei's guns have made the breach our young friend will have had time to repent his hasty words."

Then he and his friends went out, and left us looking at one another gloomily.

"What's the matter, George?" my brother asked gaily. "One would think I had been condemned to death."

"Not at all," I answered, shaking off my gloom. "I was only thinking how we were deceived in that fellow. Fancy Beula at the head of a body of stormers!"

"It will be a night attack, so perhaps he'll lose his way in the dark," my brother answered, and later on the words acquired a strange significance.

"How you youngsters chatter!" exclaimed Rakoczy cheerfully. "The place hasn't been summoned yet, and Hentzi may surrender."

This, of course, was possible, though not probable, and the very next day the idea had to be put aside altogether.

"The emperor, my august master, has entrusted to me the keys of Buda; I will return them to him alone. Meanwhile my honour and my duty command me to defend the fortress, and I will do so to the last man. Should the twin cities perish in the conflict, I declare you responsible for their ruin. I appeal to God, my right, and my sword."

That was Hentzi's reply to the summons to surrender, and I could not but

admire the writer of it.

"Brave words these," said Rakoczy, "and he's a brave man if he makes them good, though I don't exactly see why he should bombard Pesth, when our guns will be on the Blocksberg."

It was the fourth of May when the answer came, and Görgei, who had established his headquarters at Schwabenberg, immediately gave orders for the beginning of the siege operations.

For the next week the fighting was mainly confined to outpost engagements, in which our regiment had little share; then the batteries were opened between the Stuhl-Weissenberg and Vienna gates.

This being the weakest part of the defence, Hentzi had strengthened it with twenty-five guns, which thundered away at our artillery day and night.

For the greater part of another week the terrible cannonade continued, and as we lay on the hillside we saw with intense grief the beautiful twin cities wrapped in flames.

During the second week we had much more of Stephen's company than usual, and I heard with regret that the general had given him leave to volunteer for the attack.

He rallied me on my sober looks, saying it was no more dangerous for him than for me, as the 9th Honveds were to form one of the assaulting columns.

It was the evening of May 17, and several officers, including Stephen, were watching the heavy guns at work, when Count Beula came up.

The story of the quarrel in the restaurant had spread widely, and the officers waited with much curiosity to see how the meeting would go off.

"Well," said the count, bowing all round in his finicking way, "I hear that the breach is nearly practicable."

"We shall most likely start in a few hours."

"Then you have not drawn back?"

"My place is with the first column," said Stephen calmly.

"Ah! I lead the fourth. I am going now to see the general, but, as you say, we shall meet in the fortress," and he lounged off.

As the count had stated, the breach was considered practicable, but the great guns thundered on, doing as much damage as was possible before the assault took place.

Our regiment, being the farthest off, was to start first; but the evening wore away, and Rakoczy had not received any definite orders.

Always careful of his men, he made them turn in early; but we officers sat or stood about in groups, talking over the chances of the coming assault.

It was nearly midnight when Stephen, who had been sent for by the chief, returned, and we crowded eagerly round him, anxious to know what had been

decided.

My brother first delivered his message to the colonel; but as no secret was made of it, we soon learned that the assault was fixed for the first streak of dawn.

Several of the officers now went to get an hour's rest, but Stephen and I passed the time with the colonel, who maintained a cheerful conversation.

Just at the last he left us alone, and it was only then I discovered the real state of my feelings.

Stephen, too, was much affected; but he carried it off well--not lightly or vaingloriously, but as a brave lad should.

I thought, and think still, he was greatly to blame for getting into such a scrape; but no one could blame his conduct afterwards.

"Let us say farewell, dear old fellow," he whispered, "in case one of us should not return. If I fall, remember you are the head of the Botskay family, and that our father died fighting for his king."

"I don't forget; and if my time has come, take this ring and portrait to the ladies at Vienna, and say a word of farewell to the fräulein."

At this he threw off his grave air, and joked me pleasantly, so that when the signal was made to fall in, we took our places in quite a cheerful humour.

My brother, of course, went with the stormers, while we followed closely in support.

It was still dark, but we trusted the guides to keep us straight, and calculated on arriving at the breach as soon as dawn broke.

No one spoke, and hardly a sound was heard as the column wound its stealthy way along.

By this time the cannonade had ceased, and it seemed also as if the sorely-harassed garrison had ventured to take a short rest. Tramp, tramp, we marched along, pausing at intervals to give the rear of the column time to close up.

The men with the scaling-ladders were out of sight, but we kept on in the weird and eerie darkness, expecting every moment to see the flash of the rockets, and to hear the thunder of the guns.

All was, however, silent, and I wondered we had come across no sign of the other columns.

I don't know why it should have done so, but the truth suddenly flashed into my mind--we had lost our way.

I spoke to the colonel, and it was obvious he shared my opinion.

"Yes," said he quietly. "We certainly ought to be in touch with them by now. Run forward and question the guides."

I did so with difficulty, but might have spared myself the trouble. They had lost their heads completely, and were painfully groping their way, now in this direction, now that.

Remembering Stephen's scornful words about Count Beula losing the route in the dark, I dared not speak to my brother, but hurried back to Rakoczy.

I had barely told him the story, when far on the left the guns roared out. Bright flashes of flame leaped from their muzzles, telling us that the garrison was on the alert, and that we were not at hand to help our comrades.

I hardly heard the colonel's orders. My head was in a whirl. I walked or ran just when and where the others did, wondering all the time what Stephen would do.

What a triumph for Count Beula!

Hitherto I had feared for my brother's life; now I would have cheerfully laid down mine that he might have a chance of risking his. Guided by the flashes of light and the sound of the guns, we ran on, hoping we might yet be in time to strike one blow.

The dawn was breaking; we could see our way more clearly, and were getting near enough to hear the shouts and cries of the combatants.

"Forward, my brave lads! forward!" I cried excitedly. "We shall do it yet!" But alas for my hopes! Suddenly there came a wave of cheering, and then, as if to herald the first pink streak of the opening day, the triumphant notes were heard of a song well known to most of us. The attack had failed. The victorious garrison were jubilantly singing the Austrian National Anthem, "Heil, unser Kaiser, heil!" as our three shattered columns hastily fled.

Seeing that for the present all was lost, Rakoczy halted his column, and in shame and confusion we retraced our steps.

Really it was a fortunate circumstance we had thus blundered, as the breach was not fit, and the scaling-ladders had been found too short for their purpose.

Our comrades, whose losses were enormous, had struggled gallantly, and by common consent the bravest man among them was Count Beula.

Everywhere we heard the most marvellous tales of his daring and recklessness. He had fought in the very front, had cheered his men again and again to the attack, and, while they fell around him in scores, had himself remained unharmed.

He had not got his foot inside Buda, but his reputation was established, and it was acknowledged he had made his vaunt good.

Rakoczy, who knew how terribly my brother suffered under what he deemed a disgrace, tried to cheer him.

"Don't fret about it, my boy," he exclaimed brightly; "'twas not your fault. The count had the luck--that's all. No one who knows you will question your courage."

"It's very kind of you to speak like that," my brother replied, "but all the talking in the world won't alter the facts. Perhaps I shall feel better after the next attempt."

"There's no need to try again," I said stoutly. "You did your best, and can't be blamed because the guides missed the route."

"Do you think I will let a shadow of reproach rest on our name?" he said. "Don't try to turn me, George; it is useless. My mind is made up, and, with or without the general's leave, I mean to take part in the next assault."

The colonel signed to me to let the subject drop, which I did, and presently we all sat down to breakfast.

After the meal and an hour's sleep, Stephen said he must report himself to the general, and Rakoczy made an excuse for us to go with him.

"He may drop across Beula," whispered the colonel, "and if we're there the meeting will be less awkward."

Rakoczy guessed rightly. We found the count near Görgei's tent, the centre of an admiring group of officers, to whom he was relating the events of the previous night.

He carried himself with his usual swagger, and catching sight of us, cried jovially,--

"Ah! here comes my young friend who lost his way in the dark."

There was a laugh at this, which made me hot and angry; but Stephen's behaviour was, to my thinking, admirable.

His face was very white, and his lips twitched a little, but he spoke quite calmly.

"Count Beula," he said, "permit me to add my congratulations to those of your brother officers. What you did last night will never be forgotten by this army. We are not good friends, you and I, but that doesn't prevent me from admiring your bravery. Last night I failed to keep my promise; next time I may be more successful."

"Well spoken!" said Rakoczy, and a familiar voice behind us echoed the words.

The second speaker was Görgei himself, who had come from his tent in time to hear what was said.

The count smiled, showing his white teeth.

"Captain Botskay must have been terribly annoyed at finding himself out of reach of danger," he said sweetly.

Here again it was impossible to take offence at his words, though they might, and most likely did, convey a false meaning.

Görgei, however, came handsomely to the rescue.

"It would be something of a novelty," he said bluntly. "I doubt if he has been out of danger before since the war began.--But I say, colonel, somebody made a horrible mess of it last night. You'll have to put your fellows in the front next time."

Rakoczy saw his chance of getting in a counter-stroke on the count, and seized it.

"Yes," he said, smiling pleasantly, "I was afraid the affair would fall through without us, though I hear Count Beula did not fail through want of trying."

"There's praise for you, count!" cried Görgei with a broad laugh. "But we'll have another try soon, and then, if you don't succeed, I'll lead the stormers myself.--Captain Botskay, you're just in time to take a message to Pesth;" and he carried Stephen off to his tent.

The colonel and I stayed awhile chatting, but not being over fond of the count's company, we took the first opportunity to go.

As soon as the wounded were brought in, the gunners resumed the bombardment, while Hentzi, on his side, not only replied to our fire, but sent hundreds of shells hurtling across the water into the town.

Stephen told us that the state of the city was pitiable. Whole quarters had been destroyed, and hundreds of people, not only homeless but in imminent danger of their lives, were camping on the Rakos, whither they had carried the wounded soldiers, both Hungarian and Austrian.

Meanwhile Görgei thundered day and night at the walls, while the stout-hearted garrison worked like slaves, repairing the breaches, erecting breastworks, and doing everything possible to strengthen their position.

All the officers who were not of Kossuth's party grumbled openly at this waste of time and loss of valuable lives; but since the fortress had to be taken, every one felt the sooner the better.

During the evening of the twenty-first of May we marched to the trenches and lay on our arms, once more waiting for the signal to rush forward.

"The general means to get in this time," said Rakoczy. "There are nearly twenty thousand of us, all told, in the trenches."

"He can't afford to risk a second repulse," remarked my brother, who, in spite of all our efforts, had insisted on joining us. "By the way, Aulich has driven the Austrians back to Presburg."

"But for this folly we should be under the walls of Vienna now."

"What time is the attempt to be made?" I asked.

"Midnight, I believe; so we've some time to wait yet."

After that, relapsing into silence, we sat in the gathering gloom, each busy

with his own thoughts; and sad enough mine, at least, were.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW STEPHEN CARRIED THE FLAG.

"George!"

"All right, old boy," I answered in a whisper, rubbing my eyes. "I believe I've been asleep."

"I'm sure you have. But wake up now; the word to be ready has come."

At the very moment of waking I knew something was wrong, but it was not until my brother spoke the second time that I remembered where we were.

By some odd chance I had been dreaming of the years gone by, when Stephen and I were merry children playing in the old home at Gyula.

The past had returned to me so vividly--the sound of my father's voice, the picture of my mother's beautiful face and loving smile--that even now I could scarcely grasp the truth.

I had forgotten all about the cruel war, the trenches, the coming assault, and the near danger of death, so that the shock of awakening unnerved me for the moment.

The word had come! What word? Where was I? Ah! my memory returned with a rush, and I sprang to my feet.

"Steady, old fellow," said my brother cheerfully; "we mustn't make a noise yet."

I pressed his hand and whispered,--

"I had forgotten. I was dreaming we were children at home again."

"Don't, George; you hurt me," said he sharply, as if in pain, though I only pressed his hand gently.

It was past midnight, and the men were in their places, while the bands stood massed behind the lines.

The colonel came to us, and shook each by the hand.

"One never knows what may happen," he said. "There will be a fearful struggle. After Görgei's words the other day, my regiment can't go back; so, in case of accidents, you know--" And he shook our hands again.

Rakoczy seemed much graver than usual, but I think he was filled with pity on his men's account.

Stephen was, on the contrary, much more cheerful.

"George and I had a solemn leave-taking the other night," he said gaily, "and yet we didn't see a shot fired."

"Ah!" exclaimed the colonel, responding to his humour; "we have no chance of missing our way this time."

He moved off to his place, and again all was still.

The silence and the darkness got on my nerves. I dreaded yet longed for the signal at the same time.

We did not see the count, but he had sent a sarcastic message to Stephen during the evening, appointing a meeting inside the fortress.

I leaned on my sword, staring into the darkness.

"Dreary work this!" exclaimed a voice in my ear, and Dobozy joined me.

Like the rest of us, he looked forward to a terrible slaughter, and had come to say a word of farewell.

"I hope we shall soon go," he continued, after a pause; "the men are getting nervous."

"The general's keeping up a tremendous cannonade," I whispered. "The guns must be nearly red-hot. Why, it's actually getting lighter."

"Nearly two o'clock," said Stephen. "I suppose the general's been waiting for the engineer's report."

Dobozy left us, and we resumed our watching.

Although two-thirds of May had run out, it was bitterly cold in those early morning hours, and several times I shivered violently.

The night was passing, and we could now see our own men, the still shadowy outlines of surrounding objects, and the ramparts of the fortress.

At length the moment arrived. A flight of shells and fiery rockets went hissing and trailing over the stronghold; our men changed from figures of shadowland into beings of flesh and blood; a hoarse whisper of command circulated through the trenches; the massed bands stationed behind broke into soul-stirring music; almost without knowing it we were advancing. Stephen, with a last handshake, a murmured good-bye, darted to the front. I headed the company; Rakoczy, to whose eyes the sparkle had returned, led the regiment.

We moved forward unopposed; Hentzi was saving his ammunition.

Of the conflict to the right and left I am not competent to speak; I know only the doings of our own regiment, and of the battalion led by Count Beula, which chance or fate brought close to us.

Concerning the Austrians, or rather Croats, who held the fortress, it would be unjust to attempt to belittle their stubborn bravery. At the beginning of the

siege General Hentzi had made a proud boast, and no man ever fulfilled a vaunt more truly.

As the men with the scaling-ladders ran to plant their burdens, the great guns of the fortress boomed out, and instantly the place became like a babel.

Cries of rage and pain rent the air, almost drowning the rattle of the musketry and the roar of the cannon.

Through the smoke-cloud that shut out our view the white flashes pierced more and more quickly, as if the artillerymen were not giving themselves one moment's breathing space.

A man at my side exclaimed "Oh!" in a surprised sort of way, and dropped, while I barely understood he was dead.

A few paces farther a bursting shell knocked over half a dozen.

We were rapidly approaching the thick of the firing.

"Forward! forward!" cried our colonel cheerfully. "The safest place is at close quarters."

I remember laughing to myself and thinking it would be even safer at Debreczin with Kossuth and the members of the Diet.

Bang! bang! The firing grew heavier, and our losses more considerable; but, as Rakoczy had said, there was no retreat for the 9th Honveds.

After the mess we had made of it before, we were bound to get inside the fortress--that is, if any of us survived to reach the walls, which seemed doubtful.

Meanwhile most of the ladder-men were dead or disabled. The stormers had taken their places, and were trying to rear the ladders against the ramparts.

Stephen was with them, his face aflame, his eyes burning with excitement.

We were quite near when he got one planted, and instantly began to climb.

The light was breaking now, and our fellows cheered madly as they beheld the lithe, graceful figure springing to the top.

A group of Croats, led by an officer, waited patiently with bayonets fixed, and I groaned at the thought of what must happen.

Inspired by his example, the men crowded behind him eagerly--too eagerly, as it proved; for the ladder, groaning and creaking beneath their weight, snapped off, and the whole party dropped with a crash to the ground.

Several never moved again, and I must confess I hoped Stephen was hurt, since it would save him from a sadder fate. To our astonishment, however, he jumped up from the wriggling mass, and was soon cheering on the survivors to fresh efforts.

A loud shout on the left proclaimed that something of importance was happening there, and then it was I beheld Count Beula.

The Croats were yelling with savage joy. Out of a dozen ladders not one remained upright, and the remnant of the assailants was in retreat, with the ex-

ception of the count.

I always disliked the man, and indeed to this day I hate him, yet I must admit that here at Buda and elsewhere he proved himself a first-class fighting man.

He stood now alone, save for the dead and wounded; but though the bullets fell around him fast, he never budged an inch.

The distance was too great for me to see his face clearly, but I felt quite sure his lips were curled in a sarcastic sneer.

Enemy of mine though he was, I cheered with the rest when, as if tired of waiting for the runaways to come back, he coolly advanced alone.

What occurred next, or who induced the battalion to return, I cannot say, as the colonel immediately gave the signal for the assault.

The men responded with a cheer. They burned to be on the walls, where they could meet the defenders on more equal terms, and the regiment bounded forward like one man.

Now, too, I missed Stephen, for the fighting became so fierce and confused that it was impossible to see anything beyond what took place close at hand.

The fire from the great guns continued steadily; but it was less violent, and we afterwards learned that three of the pieces had blown up.

The bullets, however, rattled down faster than ever, and man after man fell.

The rest of us rushed on. We were at the breach. Already some of the stormers were entering, and my heart leaped to my mouth as I saw Stephen foremost.

[image]

"My heart leaped to my mouth as I saw Stephen foremost." Page 233.]

Plainly he was determined that the count should have no cause to crow over him this time.

I caught a brief glimpse of Rakoczy. He had been hurt, but his voice was still cheerful as he encouraged his men forward.

On and up we went, sometimes packed together, then separated into small groups, while frequently one of the foremost came crashing backward, falling at the foot of the battlements.

Though numbers dropped, the survivors pressed on doggedly. Whatever our loss, every one knew now that the assault must prove successful.

Vainly the Croats poured in their murderous volleys; they could not keep us back. We were getting into close touch with them, where steel would take the place of lead.

I was a short distance behind the colonel when he suddenly paused, waved

his sword, and cheered vigorously.

The Honveds took up the cry, and the sound of their voices drowned all else, while I stood spell-bound.

The first of the assailants had put foot inside the fortress; the first Hungarian flag fluttered on the ramparts.

For one moment I was the proudest, as I was soon to be the most miserable lad in Hungary; for the flag belonged to the 9th Honveds, and the soldier guarding it was my brother.

"That's one better than Count Beula!" shouted Dobozy, when another cheer arose. A little to the left the count appeared--the second to mount the walls.

Perhaps I lost a second--not more--enjoying my triumph; then I shot past the colonel, and reached my brother's side.

He had already received several hurts, but was still gallantly holding his ground against long odds, when I joined him.

"Bravo, old fellow!" I cried, parrying a fierce thrust from an Austrian officer.

"It's all right now, George! I beat him!" he shouted.

At the same moment a savage-looking Croat sprang at him; but there was the rapid gleam of a bayonet, a sharp cry, and the fellow fell dead.

A swift glance showed me Mecsey Sándor, who throughout the fight had, as usual, followed my steps like a dog.

Every moment now strengthened us, while it weakened the enemy, who, seeing this, made a desperate effort to hurl us back before the rest of our forces arrived.

A tall, fine-looking veteran, with huge snowy moustaches, led the charge, cutting his way almost to the walls.

The others were beaten off; but they came at us again and again, till scarcely a single officer remained alive to lead them.

It was cruel work, and I rejoiced with my whole heart when at length the brave fellows, overwhelmed by numbers, sullenly gave way.

Stephen, forgetful of his wounds, leaped forward with the flag, and we all followed, panting like hounds with the quarry in sight.

Count Beula, who had fought his way well to the front without receiving a scratch, ran with the main body; but in front of every one was my brother, with Sándor and myself next, and the wounded Rakoczy a foot or so behind.

The flag danced and waved in the reddening dawn; then suddenly it fell, rising again the next instant as proudly as before, but now, alas! stained with newly-shed blood.

The Croats, as if ashamed of retreating--though they had little cause for shame--once more drew together, and those who had loaded rifles fired into the midst of us.

A few men fell, but they were mere drops in the ocean. The crowd closed up solid and compact as before, and it was seen that the enemy had made their final effort.

A wild cheer greeted the hoisting of a white flag on the summit of the citadel; a wilder one still was raised when Stephen planted the glorious red, white, and green colours beside it.

My loved brother stood there a few moments, his face white, save where the red blood trickled, his eyes bright and burning, his bearing proud and defiant.

But, alas! I saw that he held the staff with effort, and, climbing up, was just in time to catch his swaying body as it fell.

"Dear old George!" he murmured, "I meant to do it, and succeeded."

Then his eyes closed, his head sank, and I laid him gently on the ground in the shadow of the flag he had borne to victory.

The noise of the conflict ceased. The Croats, yielding their arms, were granted quarter, and marched off as prisoners. Buda was ours!

I heard later how fearful the struggle had been. Of the twenty-five guns near the breach but one remained of service, and near the spot where we forced an entrance lay a group of no less than thirty-six Austrian officers.

The foremost was Hentzi himself, who, in the very front of the fight, had gained imperishable renown, both for himself and the flag he had so stubbornly defended.

Many hard words had been said of him when, lying out on the hillside, we had watched our beautiful Pesth half ruined by his artillery; but he had fought and died like a brave soldier and loyal subject of his emperor.

These things were far enough from my mind on the morning of the storming; in fact, I forgot all else in tending my wounded brother.

Several men came and looked at him sorrowfully. Rakoczy was one, I know; and I believe, but am not sure, that one was Count Beula.

Then a little group approached, the leader being a surgeon, who stooping down shook his head in grief.

The others brought water and bandages, and he washed away the blood, leaving the face wan and colourless. Then he loosened my brother's jacket, uttering a hasty exclamation at sight of something beneath.

I sat stupid with grief beside the wounded lad, nothing rousing me till I beheld the closely-cropped hair and rugged features of General Görgei.

"My poor boy!" said he, in a tone soft and caressing as a woman's. "Stephen, don't you know me? I am Arthur Görgei. Look at me, my dear young friend," and he gently chafed my brother's hand.

At the general's words Stephen opened his eyes, and looked at Görgei with a feeble smile.

"It's--all--right--general," he murmured very softly, and his eyes closed again.

Görgei stooped and kissed the boyish face tenderly.

"As gallant a youth as ever fought for Hungary, and worthy of his honourable name!" said he with deep feeling.

Then, turning to me, he spoke some kindly words, and, having questioned the surgeon privately, went his way.

The master of legions has little time for private griefs; and indeed this visit to my brother, taking place as it did before anything else was done, furnished matter for much talk in the army.

When the general had gone, the surgeon came to me. He had a pleasant face, and the horrors of war had failed to blunt the natural kindness of his heart.

"Captain Botskay," he began, "this is a very sad event; but you must be brave, and nerve yourself to bear the blow. Your brother is seriously hurt--so seriously indeed that I dare not venture to move him."

"Do you mean he is dying?" I asked hoarsely.

"One ought never to despair," he answered; "and yet I cannot hold out false hopes to you. Only a miracle, my poor boy, can save your brother's life. I have done what I can for him. He is not in pain, but his wounds are fatal. It may not be for an hour or two, but certainly he cannot live through the day."

"Thank you," I said simply, turning again to my task of watching.

At the end of an hour some one placed an open flask in my hand, saying, "Drink, my sweet master; it will keep up your strength."

It was Mecsey Sándor who had brought me food and drink.

I shook my head.

"I cannot take it," I said.

The faithful fellow insisted.

"You are weak, my sweet master," he urged. "In a little time you will become faint for want of food, you will grow delirious, and perhaps just then the captain will ask for you."

I stretched out my hand for the food eagerly, alarmed by Sándor's suggestion, as the worthy fellow intended I should be.

It must have done me good, though I ate and drank mechanically, hardly knowing, indeed, what I did.

The morning passed very slowly. Twice the kind-hearted surgeon returned; but, as he had said, nothing could be done--we had only to wait for the end.

Towards the middle of the afternoon I discovered Rakoczy standing near me.

He had been badly wounded, and his proper place was in the hospital; but, like a stanch friend, he had come directly his hurts were dressed to share my grief.

"Is there no hope?" he asked.

I shook my head. "The surgeon says he will die before the day is out."

"Poor old Stephen!"

That was all--not a long rigmarole of words, but just a few that came from his heart.

Then we sat and watched the dying lad in silence. Even now the pain I felt was more like that caused by a horrid nightmare than by a proper understanding of the truth.

Could this swathed and bandaged figure really be my bonny brother--he who so short a time back was full of life, and hope, and energy?

So motionless he lay, so still, that I frequently pressed my lips to his to find if he still breathed.

Had it been possible, I would willingly have changed places with him; for Stephen had ever been the object of my fondest love.

"George!"

The sound almost brought the tears to my eyes, it was so feeble, and recalled so vividly the memory of our childhood.

I gazed lovingly into the dear face, already taking the hue of death.

"I am dying, George, but don't grieve for me. With a good conscience, death is not hard, and I have tried to do my duty. Our father is smiling on me, and I am content. Is that Rakoczy? Dear old friend! True as steel! Is it evening? My sight is dim. Closer, brother; let me feel you. Ah!"

I thought he had drawn his last breath, but presently he rallied.

"Rakoczy," he said very feebly, "good-bye! Tell the general. Remember me sometimes. What's that? John, you are weeping! 'John the Joyous' in tears--and for me? Good-bye, brother; God bless you."

I placed my arm tenderly round his neck, and kissed him. I could not make answer in any other way; the words choked in my throat.

Just at the last he whispered,--

"George, stand by Görgei. He is the true patriot."

As we bent over him, he smiled at us with infinite tenderness; then his eyes closed, and his breathing became hard; he tried to speak, but only one word escaped his lips, and that so faint we could not tell if it were my name or the general's.

Rakoczy touched my arm.

"God has taken your brother to Himself!" he exclaimed solemnly.

I heard him in a dazed way, and with true thoughtfulness he retired, leaving me alone to battle with my grief.

I will not dwell upon the despair that wellnigh overwhelmed me. There are secrets of the heart that one does not betray even to the dearest of friends; but all

who have lost some loved one will readily enter into my sufferings.

When Rakoczy returned, I wiped away my tears and stood up, ready, though my heart was nearly breaking, to act in a manner worthy of him who had gone from me.

The general, who, since the opening of the campaign, had grown very fond of my brother, gave orders that he should have a grand military funeral, and assisted at the ceremony himself.

We wrapped the dead lad in the flag he had carried so bravely to the front, and buried him on the very spot where he fell.

They told me afterwards that Count Beula was there to show respect to his late opponent; but I did not see him, and had no wish to do so.

I cannot pretend that Stephen was blameless in the matter, but, rightly or wrongly, I looked on the count as being partly responsible for my brother's death, and hated him.

The last volley was fired, the band struck up a spirited air, the troops marched off the ground, and after a while I was left alone to indulge my grief at the side of the newly-made grave.

CHAPTER XVI.

I JOIN THE STAFF.

The fortress of Buda fell on the twenty-second of May. It was now the fifth of June, and the twin cities, though sorely scarred by the terrible bombardments, had dressed themselves in gala costume.

All the troops--the 9th Honveds amongst them--stationed in the two towns were assembled under arms; and the men of the artillery on both sides of the Danube stood to their guns.

A glance at the streets, however, showed that the citizens did not anticipate any fighting.

The scene was a most animated one, and under happier circumstances I should doubtless have enjoyed the brilliant spectacle. Hundreds of gay flags--the red, white, and green stripes predominant--fluttered from the cupolas of the buildings; arches of garlands stretched across the streets; the people, dressed in

their best finery, and many of them carrying splendid bouquets, promenaded to and fro, or occupied good positions from which to view the coming pageant.

All along the route from the railway station the windows were crowded by richly-dressed ladies and children, craning their necks to catch the first sight of the hero.

As our regiment marched to take its place, I could not help thinking of the many ruined families and the hundreds of wounded soldiers to whom this pageant must seem little more than a hollow mockery.

"I don't think this triumphal entry shows good taste on his part," I remarked to Dobozy, after we had halted.

"Suit him capitally!" declared he. "It's just like a stage-play. Did you hear how he is coming from Szolnok?"

"By rail, I suppose."

"Yes, and in the emperor's private carriage. Anything's good enough for a thorough-paced republican."

"I suppose his wife accompanies him?"

Dobozy laughed and said we should see.

Suddenly the guns roared out their brazen welcome; the people, waving their flags, cheered loudly; the bands played Rakotzy's patriotic march, and a company of guards issued from the station. Then the cheering became louder and wilder, and shouts of "Elijen Kossuth!" rose as Count Karoly's handsome chariot, drawn by four magnificent Hungarian horses, made its appearance. In it, his head crowned with laurel, sat the observed of all beholders, Louis Kossuth, Dictator of Hungary, and on his right a tall, haughty-looking woman with black hair and eyes, pointed nose, long chin, and regular mouth.

This was the dictator's wife, Madame Theresa Kossuth, and I thought, though perhaps wrongly, that the light in her eyes was one of satisfied pride.

Behind the chariot rode a long line of Magyar nobles, making a brilliant show in their national costume, though, for the country's sake, I would rather have seen them at the front in simple uniform.

As Dobozy truly remarked, patriotism required very little sacrifice if it was satisfied by riding about the streets of the capital in gala attire.

However, the procession passed, the hero was withdrawn from sight, and we were at liberty to return to barracks.

The festivities continued all day, and in the evening the city was illuminated in honour of the dictator.

"Foolish people!" said the colonel sadly, as we strolled along the river-bank that night. "One would think, to see their transports, that the war is over, while it is really only beginning."

"I can't understand why the general doesn't make a forward move, and drive

the enemy out of Presburg."

"Because he's waiting for ammunition and men," put in Dobozy, who was walking with us. "I saw Juranics yesterday--just come from the front, wounded in some outpost affair, I believe. He says only half the recruits have been sent on, and they don't even know their drill. Besides, they haven't any weapons, if they knew how to use them. Lively sort of army, eh? Juranics said plainly he believed Kossuth's party was jealous of Görgei's success."

"They're afraid he'll topple their brand-new republic over," said the colonel; "which is just what he would do if the Austrians were cleared out. However, it's too late now. While we've been wasting our time, the enemy has been getting ready."

"They say we shall have 160,000 Russians, besides the Austrians, to tackle."

"That's so," replied the colonel cheerfully; "while we are split up into two factions, each fighting for a different object."

Matters were, indeed, in a more desperate state than we thought. The Austrians, thoroughly frightened for the safety of the empire, had begged the assistance of Russia.

They had already twice changed their chief, and were now led by Baron Haynau, an officer who had won distinction in several campaigns, but whose name was hereafter to be linked with acts of savage cruelty against which all Europe cried out in horror. He was now at Presburg with 60,000 men, waiting for the arrival of a veteran Russian division, which had been dispatched to his assistance.

The principal Russian army, 76,000 strong, and led by the famous field-marshal, Paskewitch, was in Galicia, ready to descend on Central Hungary by way of the Carpathians. A third Russian army was to invade Transylvania, while Jellachich covered Croatia.

However, there were gay doings in Pesth for one day at least, and when we turned in at night the city was still *en fête*.

I think it was the third evening after Kossuth's triumphal reception when the colonel sent word that he wished to see me. Being off duty, I returned with the messenger, little dreaming how great a change in my prospects the next half-hour would produce.

"Come in," cried Rakoczy pleasantly, as I knocked at the door.

He was standing by the window overlooking the barrack-yard with another man, whom I immediately recognized as Görgei.

"All well?" cried the general genially, stretching out his hand. "That's right. Bit tedious hanging about Pesth, eh?"

"I think we should all be glad of a change, general."

"You'll all get one soon, when the white-coats drive you out, and even then

you'll grumble--eh, colonel?" and he gave Rakoczy a playful dig in the ribs.

"We'd much rather help you get inside Vienna," replied the colonel.

The general's smile vanished.

"Too late!" he said shortly. "That should have been done a month ago. Take my word for it, old comrade, the game is lost; but we'll play it right out all the same, and only give in when we must.--Botskay, can you ride?"

"Fairly well," I answered, not wishing to boast.

"Would you like to come with me?"

"The general means on his staff," explained Rakoczy, smiling.

Now, I should have liked this very much indeed, but for leaving Rakoczy, and this made me hesitate.

The colonel, seeing my difficulty, laughed, and said,--

"I'll answer for him, general. The berth will suit him capitally. The campaign has made him pretty hardy, and he'll soon learn to do without sleep."

"Well," said the general kindly, laying his hand on my shoulder, "I shall be glad to have you. I was very fond of your brother, and miss him more than you would think. So just pack up anything you may want. I'm leaving by the steamer in an hour."

I hurried to my room and called for Mecsey, who received the order to pack without betraying the least surprise. He would have taken it quite as a matter of course had I been appointed commander-in-chief.

Then I went to say farewell to the officers of my regiment, had a last chat with Dobozy, who was sorry to lose me, and finally returned to the colonel's room.

"Good-bye, George," exclaimed my old friend warmly. "Sorry we're parting, but it will be better for you. Besides, we shall often see each other, and the war can't last long. From what the general tells me, we haven't the slightest chance. His army's in a wretched state, and the other leaders are all pulling different ways. However, we must keep our heads up and do the best we can; but don't take too many risks, my boy. Görgei will keep you well occupied, and there's no sense in knocking your head against a stone wall just for the fun of the thing."

"Not a bit!" cried the general, coming in at the moment, "even if you have a wooden one. Well, good-bye, old fellow. We shall soon begin to move now, one way or the other. Get the regiment into trim as soon as you can; every man will be wanted.--Ready, Botskay? Come on then."

Rakoczy pressed my hand, and accompanied us to the gates, where Sándor was already in waiting.

With another warm hand-shake we left the colonel, and walked sharply to the embankment.

Görgei had thrown an ample grey mantle over his sombre uniform, and had pulled his hat over his brow as if not particularly wishing to be recognized.

He did not speak till we reached the landing-place, where a boat lay with steam up, ready to cast off at a moment's notice.

"Jump aboard," he exclaimed sharply. Then, to a sailor, "Help this man with the baggage. Are you right?--Go ahead, captain."

The ropes were cast off, as I could tell by the movements of the steamer, but it was now too dark to see much.

Görgei disappeared, while I, going to the bow of the boat, gazed ahead into the gloom.

Here and there a light shining from the river's bank roused my interest for the moment; but taking it altogether, it was dreary work, and I thought regretfully of the snug barracks.

Presently, however, Görgei joined me, and in his company I lost all sense of weariness and discomfort.

Though burdened by such a load of care, and ready at any moment to assume the sternness of the chief, he laughed and joked with me as if we were equals, his cheerful gaiety making the time pass quite pleasantly.

Indeed the general was a splendid companion, but he had two foibles--he thought sleep was a mistake, and eating a luxury one should try to do without.

With these opinions I did not altogether hold, so I inwardly blessed the captain of the boat when he suggested we should go below and have a snack of supper.

Having made a good meal, I wrapped myself up warmly and lay down, leaving Görgei poring over some maps and making calculations.

I cannot say what occurred during the night, but when I awoke next morning the general was still intent on his work and looking fresh as ever.

About mid-day the steamer slowed down; a boat was lowered, into which Sándor put my baggage; then Görgei got in, and we followed.

We were not near any town, but the general had evidently made his arrangements, for as the sailors pulled us ashore, a body of soldiers--some on foot, others on horseback--came down to the water's edge.

Görgei sprang out briskly, and held a hurried conversation with the leader of the party. Then he directed a soldier to give me his horse, mounted his own--a beautiful grey--and we all set off for headquarters.

The appearance of the army confirmed my feeling of despondency. The men who had served throughout the campaign were in good trim, but those newly drafted to make up for our previous losses looked anything but soldiers.

I discovered, too, that the officers were secretly uneasy, and their anxiety increased when, a few days after my arrival, Görgei's scouts brought word that a Russian division had joined Haynau at Presburg.

This was on the fourteenth of June, and two days later witnessed the begin-

ning of what may be called the second campaign.

Our engineers had built several bridges over the river Waag, and on the fifteenth of June the army crossed to the farther side.

"Ah!" exclaimed one of my new comrades regretfully, "if we could have done this a month ago!"

"We should be in Vienna now," said another gaily; "but we aren't, and it's no use grumbling. Here comes Bethlen. Klapka has sent him with an important message, to judge by the state of his horse's flanks."

The rider approached at a gallop, pulled his horse up sharply, and having saluted, handed a note to Görgei.

The general, glancing at the contents, put the crumpled paper into his pocket.

"Tell General Klapka I'm much obliged, but I don't think anything serious will happen to-morrow."

Bethlen saluted again, nodded to several of his acquaintances, and rode away at a quieter pace.

Görgei had made his calculations accurately, and although several desperate outpost affairs occurred, it was not until the morning of the seventeenth that the two armies really joined battle.

On the very same date, although we did not know it then, Field-Marshal Paskewitch emerged from the Carpathians on his march into Central Hungary.

The battle began with a terrible artillery fire, which was directed against our centre; and Görgei himself, followed by the staff, galloped down to encourage the sorely-tried soldiers.

At the same time he sent me to the colonel of a hussar regiment with an order to break up a mass of infantry, which was preparing to hurl itself on our weakened centre.

"Directly it's done, ride back as hard as you can," he said, and I dashed off.

The colonel listened to the order, well pleased.

"Tell the general we will do it," he said with quiet confidence.

"He wishes me to stay and take back your report," I answered, and the colonel kindly agreed that I should ride with him.

The regiment was composed of seasoned warriors, who hailed the sound of the trumpet with delight.

With swords bared, we started at a trot, increasing the pace as we approached the enemy.

The ground for the most part was flat, but there were several sandhills or banks, and from one of these a storm of shot ploughed into us as we rode by.

The fire was so severe and unexpected that a regiment of young soldiers would have been thrown into confusion; but these veterans only shook their fists,

vowing to capture the battery on their return.

Our horses had got into their stride now, and we were fairly racing over the level ground.

It was the first time I had taken part in a cavalry charge, and the blood ran hot in my veins.

The colonel rode upright as a dart and stiff as a poker, but I, more accustomed to a horse's back on the broad plains than in a military riding-school, rode in a much easier though less dignified position.

That men and horses were thoroughly well drilled one glance would have shown. In spite of the artillery fire and the speed at which we rode, there were no gaps. The horses raced neck by neck, with equal strides, and the whole regiment went forward like a piece of machinery.

The Austrian battalions stood quite firm to receive us, and as we got nearer I doubted very much if we could break through that solid mass.

But Görgei had not sent us to do the work alone. On our left, farther down the field, several squadrons, springing up unexpectedly, were riding straight at the battalions, and we, seeing this, cheered excitedly.

"Forward!" shouted the colonel, rising in his stirrups, "and keep together!"

Whatever was going on elsewhere, the Austrians before us stood like a stone wall till we were well within range. Then came a blinding flash, a loud report, a greyish cloud of smoke, and, from behind me, fierce shouts and cries of pain.

But above all rang out the stirring "Forward!" of the colonel, and almost at the same instant we were amongst the bayonets.

Crash! we went, driving into the very centre of the mass, splitting it up into groups, pushing it this way and that, till a ringing cheer announced that the enemy were in full flight.

The hussars, flushed and excited, would have gone pell-mell in pursuit, but fortunately the leader had his men well in hand, and made them re-form their ranks.

Our comrades farther along the field, carried away by excitement, dashed after the runaways, and were soon widely scattered.

Then, through a gap in the sandhills beyond, there suddenly issued a close, compact body of cavalry, which charged down upon us like an avalanche.

Our horses were already blown; we ourselves were spent by the fierce fight; our losses had been severe, and many of the men still in the ranks were wounded; yet the colonel did not hesitate.

Flight would result in our being cut to pieces; to stand still would give the enemy a tremendous advantage; there was nothing for it but to charge afresh.

The colonel, waving his sword, sprang to the front; the bugles rang out; the men, cheering loudly, dug their spurs into their horses' flanks. Once more the

regiment was in motion.

The distance to be covered was short, but enough to get our animals well into their stride before the crash came.

Fast as we rode, the Austrians rode still faster; and, but for the superior strength of the Hungarian horses, we should simply have been swept away by the furious shock.

As it was, we charged them gallantly, and soon steel met steel as swords crossed or rang on the polished breast-plates.

Our colonel--evidently a magnificent swordsman, and mounted on a powerful animal--drove his way through the serried ranks; but my passage was barred by the Austrian leader, who seemed to have singled me out specially.

I wondered at this for a moment; then in a flash remembered who this handsome, blue-eyed fellow was.

"Von Theyer!" rose to my lips as, sitting his horse with a natural gracefulness, the former rebel rode straight at me.

From that moment I lost sight of the general conflict.

Round us rose the cries and groans of wounded men, the cheers and countercheers of the combatants, the sound of clashing swords; but to all I gave but a passing thought.

This Von Theyer, who by some means--probably reckless bravery--had already risen high in the Austrian service, meant to kill me.

His deadly purpose shone in his eyes, and it was obvious he expected to have an easy task.

However, though he was by far the better master of the sword, I knew the more of horsemanship, and by swerving aside at the proper moment, caused his stroke to fail.

Before he recovered I had pricked him in the arm. It was a slight wound, but it drew blood and made him angry.

This was all in my favour, as he lost his caution, and, throwing away the advantage of his superior skill, attacked furiously.

Again and again I avoided his weapon almost by a miracle; but at last I made a fierce cut which he failed to parry, and my sword slashed him right across the face.

He threw up his hands with a cry of pain, falling in a heap on his horse's back.

At the same instant a shout of alarm was raised; the hussars in advance, wheeling about, came dashing back, separating me from Von Theyer.

Since I had left Görgei the aspect of the battle had entirely changed.

While we had broken the Austrian battalions, our centre, fearfully weakened by a heavy cannonade from twenty-four guns, and furiously assailed by two

brigades on its right flank, had given way.

Worse still, the Russian general, seeing that the tide was turning, sent a splendid body of cuirassiers and two field-batteries to change the retreat into rout.

It was the rapid approach of these famous horsemen that made us turn back.

The colonel was angry, but he could not hope to pit his broken regiment successfully against the cuirassiers, while a prompt retreat might enable him to cover the flight of the infantry.

So he gave the word, and we retired in good order, but at a gallop.

Meanwhile the Austrian gunners received their allies with a roar of welcome, and the cuirassiers in glittering helmets and breastplates swept proudly on.

With a message from the colonel, I made the best of my way to the chief, who as usual was in the thick of the fight, risking his life as freely as the humblest soldier.

But the day was lost. We were outnumbered both in men and guns, and the Russian division had converted a possible victory into a disastrous defeat.

For a time we made a desperate attempt to hold the village of Pered, but it was simply throwing men's lives away to no purpose; and at length the general, who, however much he objected to be beaten, did not believe in knocking his head against the wall, issued orders for a retreat.

"Find General Klapka," said he to me, "and tell him to withdraw his men across the Waag; but he must do his best to hold the bridges. If he doesn't, the enemy will chase us back to Pesth without a stop."

I turned my horse's head, and dashed off along the line of fire; but time being precious, I could not afford to go a long way round.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOUNDING OF GÖRGEI.

"All right, Sándor. It's only a pin-prick; but I've had it bandaged, though the surgeon said 'twas a waste of lint. Rub the horse down, and give it a good feed; there may be fresh work soon."

The battle was over. The army, including Klapka's division, had retired be-

yond the river, though we still held possession of the bridges. I had just returned from my dangerous ride, and the worthy Sándor had given me up for lost.

I was dead tired, and wrapping myself up cosily, lay down, expecting to fall asleep instantly.

In this I was wrong, for though my eyes closed, I could not make my brain rest.

I thought of my chivalrous brother lying wrapped in his country's flag in the citadel at Buda; I thought, too, of the gallant Rakoczy at Pesth, and wished the old regiment had been in the field that day; but, most of all, my mind dwelt upon the Austrian leader with whom I had been in deadly conflict.

The hussars had retreated too quickly for me to find out if I had killed him.

Somehow I hoped the poor fellow was not dead; though, had the case been reversed, I suppose he would not have wasted a thought on me.

From Von Theyer my mind naturally drifted to the beautiful Theresa, and I wondered how she had borne the news of her bereavement.

At least it would be some comfort when I could restore the baron's memento, and tell how we had buried him in the quiet little churchyard.

My heart grew sadder and sadder as I lingered over the details of this cruel war, which the day's fighting conclusively showed we could not carry to a successful issue.

It was not that a single defeat caused me to despair, but I saw clearly that we had thrown away our chance of victory.

Against the Austrians alone we might even now recover our position, but the arrival of the Russians had made the struggle hopeless.

Even united we should fail now, and we were not united. Envy, jealousy, and distrust had crept into our councils, and every day the breach between the two parties became wider.

Not that I would have you imagine there was more than one party in Görgei's army. We were all of one mind; but the general was hampered by the orders of the Diet, and in addition had to shape his course by the movements of Dembinski.

Thinking over these things, I lay awake till the dawn, when I at last managed to fall into a sound and refreshing slumber.

The days following our defeat at Waag were days of extreme misery. All the time we fell back, pressed by Haynau's victorious troops and their Russian allies, till we reached Raab.

Even here Görgei could do no more than make a feint of defending the place, which delayed the enemy two or three days, while our main army pushed on towards Waitzen.

I now understood more clearly the kind of life Stephen had enjoyed.

Görgei was here, there, and everywhere, directing and encouraging the men, and of course we were with him.

We slept where and when we could, and did not expect dainties--to any great extent, at least--at meal-times. Our banquets were for the most part consumed in the saddle, and consisted of bread or biscuit, cheese, and a drink of wine.

Occasionally the cheese went astray and the wine was missing; then we munched our bread thankfully, and praised the sweetness of the water.

Görgei's spirits never once gave way, though I believe that from the hour of turning our backs on the river Waag he knew in his heart the contest was hopeless.

Careful of his men, he was utterly reckless of his own safety, and several times during the retreat his staff were within an ace of being cut off.

Our old opponent Schlick led the pursuit, being well supported by the veteran Russian division which had caused our defeat on the Waag.

On the morning of the third of July Görgei halted his troops in the forest of Harkaly.

During the previous night he and I, unknown to almost every one, had retraced our steps as far as the village of Acz, which we found occupied in force by the Austrians.

Having by good-luck managed to return safely, the general spent the rest of the night making plans for striking a blow at the dogged Schlick, who seemed to be ever-lastingly hanging on our rear.

I do not know if any one else on the staff went to bed, but I lay down for an hour in the morning, and was wakened by Sándor just before the combat began.

Some of the troops were sent on ahead, where they could be seen by the enemy; while the main body of infantry, with the guns, had been secretly posted in advantageous positions.

The first blow was to be struck by the cavalry, and the various regiments presented a magnificent sight as they waited in the cover of the forest for the word to advance.

The mere notion of a fight had restored the men's spirits. They might be beaten again, but anything was better than the continual running away we had practised for the last fortnight.

Görgei, alert and vigorous, had placed himself at the head; and though we feared for his life, it was impossible not to admire his courage.

He had sent me with a message to General Klapka, and while returning I caught a glimpse of Schlick's corps moving up from Acz through the open country.

Our decoys had served their purpose, and the Austrians, thinking us still in full retreat, swung along merrily.

I hastened to the general, and from the look on his face guessed he had already heard the news.

"Yes," said he; "it's working out nicely. We'll give Herr Schlick a little surprise presently."

And we did.

The affair was over so quickly that I hardly realized it had begun.

At the word of command we issued from the forest, broke into a trot, then a gallop, finally bursting with a loud cheer upon the astonished foe.

The surprise was complete. Before they had time to make a stand they were running away.

Hatless, but unhurt, Görgei pulled up; sent Nicholas Szondi with an order to Klapka; ordered the pursuit to be continued as far as the village of Acz; and rising in his stirrups, took a further survey of the field.

"Botskay," said he quickly, "we must have half a dozen guns planted on those sandhills. See them? Off you go, then, to Benitzky, and don't lose a second."

I put my horse to the gallop, and having found the chief of artillery, delivered my message, and rode back.

At this moment the day was ours. Schlick's corps was routed, our fellows were hot in pursuit, and a few enthusiasts were already dreaming of Vienna.

But we reckoned without the Russians.

Before our artillery could get there, the sandhills were occupied by Russian guns, whose murderous fire sent our cavalry back.

At the same time our cuirassiers dashed forward on the right, and then we saw a body of infantry advancing at the double.

In half an hour the situation had become critical. Nothing could save us but the most desperate effort.

Our general, as usual, rose to the occasion. Placing himself in front of the hussars, he delivered a short but stirring address, and led them against the Russian infantry.

Twice we dashed at them in gallant style, being thrown back each time; the third time, we resolved, should pay for all.

Nicholas Szondi and I rode on either side of the general, who once more gave the word to charge.

Away we went in the midst of a cloud of bullets, while our ranks were ploughed by shot and shell.

A man somewhere behind me dropped, and his frightened horse, breaking from the ranks, rushed to the front.

With a cry of pain the colonel of the regiment fell, but I afterwards heard that the gallant fellow used what strength he had left to urge on his men.

Crash! It seemed too good to be true, but we really had driven the charge home; and the riderless horse, the first to make a gap, was lashing out furiously with its heels.

Görgei was the first man inside, but Nicholas Szondi and I followed closely, while it seemed as if the whole regiment was treading on our heels.

The Muscovite soldiers fought gallantly enough, but I think they would not have lasted other ten minutes, when a terrible misfortune happened to us.

The general, as I before remarked, was fighting like a common trooper, and several Muscovites had already felt the weight of his arm, when, suddenly slipping from his saddle, he fell to the ground.

Instantly I jumped down and ran to him, while Szondi and Mecsey Sándor, who, unknown to me, had joined in the charge, kept off a crowd of foot-soldiers.

I raised Görgei in my arms. His face was covered with blood; he was quite insensible, or dead.

A trooper came to my assistance, and between us we lifted him to his saddle.

All this time Nicholas Szondi and Sándor fought like demons in order to preserve breathing space, and by the time we got the general on his horse they were joined by several others.

The trooper held Görgei while I remounted, then Szondi joined me, and between us we cut our way through the press.

The news of the disaster quickly spread, and the hussars, disheartened by the loss of our gallant leader, drew off from the fight.

On the other hand, the Muscovites, imbued with fresh spirit, redoubled their efforts; the infantry resumed their advance, firing volley after volley into our retreating ranks.

Görgei made neither sound nor movement. He sat huddled up just as we placed him, and but for our support would have fallen helpless.

Szondi looked at me questioningly, but I shook my head. It was impossible for either of us to tell the extent of the mischief.

We rode fast till we were out of the line of fire, and I then suggested to my comrade that he should seek Klapka.

"He is in command now," I said, "and should be told at once."

Szondi nodded, and asked if I could manage alone; but the faithful Mecsey, who was close behind, volunteered to take his place.

This he did; and while Szondi galloped off to find Klapka, we proceeded with the general.

Everywhere now the battle was over, and the Muscovites had again saved their allies from destruction.

But our men retreated in fairly good order, and it was evident that, although Görgei had fallen, the army still possessed a capable chief.

Halfway through the forest the surgeons had set up an ambulance, and thither we took the general.

"Görgei?" cried the chief surgeon, when I told him what had occurred.

"Here, Moritz! Take him gently--so. Now let us see. Plenty of blood, at all events. Bring me some water. Open his jacket, Moritz, and see if the heart beats. Yes? That takes a load off my mind. Now to find the wound. Ah! I thought so.--Don't look so scared, Captain Botskay: the general will be all right in a fortnight or so. The blow has made him senseless for a time, but there ought not to be any real danger. I would let the soldiers know, if I were you; 'twill raise their spirits."

I started at once to find General Klapka, and on the way spread the welcome intelligence far and wide.

The men cheered as heartily as if we had gained a brilliant victory; for they looked on Görgei not only as a general, but as a personal friend, and there were few amongst them who would not willingly have given their lives to save his.

General Klapka was busy directing the retreat, but he found time to question me closely about his wounded chief, and was unaffectedly glad on hearing the surgeon's report.

"Görgei is just the one man Hungary cannot afford to lose," he said in his mild way, and turned again to his duties.

Having failed to stop the pursuit, the only course open to us now was to fall back upon the entrenched camp before Comorn, and this Klapka at once set about doing.

By nightfall we had completely abandoned the forest of Acz, and the vanguard had taken up a strong position several miles eastward.

I did not see Görgei again till the last man had turned into the camp at Comorn, as Klapka kept me pretty busy during the march; but I heard from time to time he was progressing favourably, and that the doctors had no doubt of his recovery.

It was strange to see him lying in his tent, his head bandaged, his face white and bloodless, his body still.

"Ah, Botskay!" said he, smiling, when I went in the first time, "I have to thank you. Szondi's been here and told me all about it. Lucky for me that I took you away from Rakoczy, eh?"

"Szondi had as much to do with it as I, general--more, in fact, for he kept the Russians off while I picked you up. There's a trooper, too, who--"

"Klapka saw to him--made him a sergeant. There's your man as well; what of him? Would he like to have the stripes?"

I shook my head smilingly. To be a sergeant, Mecsey would have to leave me, and this I was sure he would not do.

"Never mind!" exclaimed the general. "I'll find some means of doing him a good turn. He's a fine fellow, and not over free with his tongue. Well, it seems likely you'll soon meet Rakoczy again."

"Is the old regiment coming to join us?" I asked eagerly.

"No," said he; "but we are rapidly making our way back to Pesth," and he looked at me with a faint smile.

"We shall turn westward again soon," I exclaimed; but he shook his head with the air of a man who had no wish to disguise the truth from himself.

The very morning after this conversation a rumour crept through the camp, though no one seemed able to trace its origin, that Field-Marshal Paskewitch, driving Moritz Perczel's troops before him like a flock of sheep, had entered Debreczin in triumph. In the men's presence the truth of the story was contemptuously scouted, but before night the officers of the staff were made aware that for once rumour had not lied.

The great Russian army, under its famous chief, had captured Kossuth's stronghold--the headquarters of Hungarian republicanism.

This was a serious blow, and I did not wonder that our leaders looked grave.

With Paskewitch at Debreczin, and Haynau forcing us back upon Pesth, we were awkwardly placed, the more especially as we could only look to ourselves for help.

But this peril was absolutely trivial compared with the astounding information that Nicholas Szondi brought me one morning. I had been out all night seeking news of the enemy's movements, and was breakfasting alone, when my new crony joined me.

"Glad to see you busy," he said chaffingly.

I finished the steaming coffee made by the worthy Sándor, and nodded.

"General better this morning?" I asked.

"Much. Able to walk about and give directions. Can't ride yet, though; can't stand the jolting. Going to have another smack at the Austrians in a day or two--at least that's what he intended; but I suppose it won't come off now."

"Why not?" I asked curiously.

"Ah!" exclaimed my comrade eagerly, "I thought you hadn't heard the news. Count Beula's in the camp."

"Well?"

"Comes from the Diet, or Kossuth--one and the same thing, I fancy--with a letter or proclamation, or whatever you call it. Expected to find Dembinski here, it appears."

"You make a first-class story-teller, Szondi, only you're in such a dreadful hurry to get to the end. Still, the narrative's wonderfully exciting, so far."

"Keep your chaff, old fellow. You'll find the finish exciting enough."

"There is an end then? That's something to be thankful for."

Szondi took no notice of the interruption, but continued steadily,--

"This Count Beula, then, arrived last night, expecting to find the Pole; but of course we knew nothing of Dembinski."

"Not likely."

"He made himself very agreeable, and we had a pleasant evening."

"While I was sitting on my horse's back for hours, like a dummy!"

"Well," said Szondi, without even a smile, "that wouldn't be such hard work--for you."

"Not half as difficult as listening to this story."

"The story? Ah! I'm just coming to the climax. What do you think was in the letter that Beula brought for Dembinski?"

"One of Kossuth's brand-new bank-notes."

"Don't talk rubbish, Botskay. The letter is an official document proclaiming Dembinski commander-in-chief, in succession to Arthur Görgei, deposed."

"What?"

"Thought you'd get interested at the finish," said he, laughing harshly.

"How have they wrapped it up?"

"You may be sure they've sugared the pill nicely. His wound's the excuse, and he's to be made war minister, or something of that sort."

We looked hard at each other, and I saw my own thoughts reflected in Szondi's eyes.

"All right," said he. "I can tell we're both in one mind, and we'll find a good many others to join us."

"All the staff for certain."

"And every man in the army. Dembinski, indeed!"

"What does Klapka say?"

"He'll stick to Görgei through thick and thin; so will Nagy Sándor. I'm off now. See you again this evening, and tell you more about it."

Szondi's news soon spread amongst the officers, causing the greatest consternation.

To remove Görgei was to take away the very life and soul of the army. To replace him by the Pole would be rank folly.

As the day wore on, I became convinced that unless the Diet--or Kossuth, as rightly or wrongly the officers would have it--withdrew the order, there would be mischief.

Towards the end of the afternoon Szondi came to take me to a meeting of the staff.

"The fellows are furious," he said, "and want to sign a paper refusing to serve under any one but Görgei. What's your idea?"

"I'll put my name down fast enough."

"So will the others. Then we'll take it to Klapka, and he'll bring Kossuth, or whoever the mover of the affair is, to reason. Here we are at Mizvy's tent."

The discussion which took place was rather monotonous, as every one spoke

on the same side, and the keynote was that Görgei should not go.

After that Mizvy drew up a counter-proclamation, and I, being the youngest officer present, was invited to sign first, which I did. The others appended their signatures, and then Mizvy was deputed to carry the document to General Klapka, and explain matters.

"The general is sure to be with us," said one man, "but, if he needs stiffening, tell him there isn't an officer in the army who wouldn't gladly put his name to the paper."

"Nor a soldier either," added a second man.

"That will make some of them draw long faces over at Pesth," said Szondi gaily. "I don't think we shall hear much more of Dembinski as commander-in-chief."

Szondi was right. The Diet, interviewed by the two generals, Klapka and Nagy Sándor, saw it had gone too far; and Görgei was restored to his rank, almost without knowing he had been deprived of it. But the more I looked at the incident the less I liked it.

Görgei was the great chief to whom all who did not wish separation from Austria looked for guidance; and the attempt to take him from the army showed very clearly the wide gulf between the two sections of the Hungarian nation.

Meanwhile, matters were becoming very serious in all parts of the country.

In the south, Bern, who seemed to grow stronger after each defeat, still made headway against the enemy, but elsewhere our prospects were cheerless.

Field-Marshal Paskewitch was making a military promenade with his army, and it was likely that we should soon be crushed between him and Haynau.

Certainly our entrenchments were very strong, and every day--for Görgei had a great belief in pick and spade--made them stronger; but they could not keep out Haynau and the Russians.

The chief was still prevented by his wound from riding about; but he had long and anxious talks with Klapka, and it was finally decided we should make one more attempt to defeat the Austrians before Paskewitch could send them help.

It was the tenth of July when this decision was made, and none of the staff went to sleep that night till everything had been put in trim for the approaching conflict.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GÖRGEI FORGETS HIS WOUND.

"It's make or break to-day, Botskay. Of course we shall keep on fighting, but unless our fellows smash Haynau up our chance is gone."

Szondi and I were standing behind Görgei on a piece of rising ground from which we could obtain a view of the battle. The chief's face showed how annoyed he was at having to remain behind, and I nudged my comrade, who shrugged his shoulders.

"Wound or no wound," he whispered, "if the fight goes against us you'll see him in the thick of it. Look! He's waving his hand to the hussars we charged with the other day. They'd be glad to have him at their head now."

Our hearts beat high as the cavalry passed in numerous bodies, our hopes being largely placed on these gallant fellows.

Klapka had posted twenty batteries in the forest of Harkaly, and it was his plan, or rather Görgei's, by a combined attack of infantry, horse, and artillery, to break the Austrian centre, and push it back beyond the village of Czern.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when the infantry moved out, and very soon we heard the thunder of the heavy guns.

This was the beginning; I asked myself what would be the end. The soldiers knew how much depended on their exertions, and I judged by their set faces that the enemy would have all their work cut out to beat them.

Görgei stood looking intently through his glass, occasionally giving a smile of satisfaction as the troops took up their positions.

"It ought to answer," he muttered. "Upon my word, I believe we shall beat them; Klapka's handling his men beautifully. They want more guns, though, on the right. Szondi, tell Benitzky to move some of his guns to the edge of the forest.--Botskay, ride to General Klapka, and wait to see what happens in the centre. Come back the instant he drives the Austrians from the village.--Mizvy, tell Prince Leiningen to hold--"

I did not hear the rest, being already on my way to General Klapka.

The battle was now in full swing, but the thick volumes of smoke made it difficult to see what was going on.

Soon I met wounded men dropping to the rear, and from one of them gathered that the Austrian centre was getting a terrific pounding.

"They'll have to go, captain," said the man. "Flesh and blood can't stand it much longer."

After giving him a drink from my flask, I rode on, finding myself at length amongst Klapka's staff.

I delivered my message to the general, who said smilingly, "I don't think

you will have long to wait;" and turning to one of his officers, he sent him off somewhere with an order.

Everything around me was bustle and excitement. Men came and went in endless succession, and almost without a pause.

One young fellow, whose horse's nostrils were laced with foam, dashed up at a gallop, and saluted with his left arm, his right being shattered by a musket-ball.

The general said something to him, but he shook his head, smiled gaily, and was off again in spite of his broken limb.

Meanwhile the fight in the centre was fast approaching a crisis.

That the Austrians would break I felt sure, my only wonder being how they had managed to hold out so long.

Shot and shell made gaps in their ranks, a fearful musketry fire swept them away in scores, while hussars and dragoons thundered down upon them almost without intermission.

As the wounded Magyar had said, flesh and blood could not stand it much longer, and Klapka's keen eye saw that the critical moment had arrived.

Another officer darted off like lightning; and we, looking on, saw our cavalry draw up in one immense body.

We could not hear, but we knew they were cheering, and then we watched them move forward.

Walk, trot, gallop! It was a superb spectacle as the sun shone down on the beautiful horses, the forest of glittering swords, the lithe and muscular horsemen.

We held our breath as they flew over the ground, and in our intense excitement almost felt the shock as they crashed into the enemy.

So certain was the result that I asked Klapka's permission to follow, knowing how eager Görgei would be to learn every detail.

As I expected, that last charge broke the Austrian centre through and through; and the men who had stood up so bravely against the pick of our army were thoroughly beaten.

Back they went, helter-skelter, anyhow--men and guns and horses all mixed together!

Here half a company; there part of a squadron; yonder a field-gun, the horses clattering and tearing along like mad.

Back they went pell-mell into their lines, into the village, and through it; at which I turned my horse's head, and rode, cheering like a maniac, to Görgei.

"Make or break," Szondi had said. Well, we were made, and the Austrians were broken.

Good little horse! On you go, straight as the crow flies. Never mind obstacles. We'll think of these to-morrow; for we're carrying good news, my beauty.

Cheer, my lads! You have the right. There's the general! How pleased he will be at the news!

I dashed up, breathless, while my horse trembled all over.

"Czern is ours, sir!" I panted. "The Austrians are in flight!"

There were several officers near, but my head was so dizzy that I could scarcely distinguish them.

One, whom I took to be Szondi, then helped me to dismount.

The ride, the excitement, and possibly an accidental blow, though I could not remember one, had made me feel quite strange.

The men around me became shadowy figures, their conversation mere disjointed scraps, such as, "Klapka--key of position--pay for Acz--Vienna--next to Görgei," which I heard without understanding.

Then Szondi put a flask to my lips, and I took a deep draught of something which stopped the shivering in my limbs, and enabled me to stand firm.

A messenger had arrived from Klapka. He was telling the story of the Austrian flight, but with more detail, and our general's face beamed with delight.

Some of the officers had disappeared; others remained; and these, like the general, were filled with joy.

Into the huge gap which I had seen made our fellows were pouring at the double, and the battlefield rang with shouts of victory.

I had put my arm through the bridle, and stood leaning against a hillock of sand, waiting for the next order.

Suddenly there came the sound of a report so tremendous that the earth shook, and we gazed at one another aghast.

Again and again it broke forth, while the field was hidden from sight by dense curtains of thick smoke.

At a word from the general Szondi darted off, but almost before he had gone a mounted officer dashed up to us.

He came from Klapka, and told his tale briefly.

Every man and every gun of the Austrian reserve, every man and every gun of the Russian division, had been flung across the path of our victorious columns.

Eighty pieces of cannon were vomiting death; thousands of rifles were pouring deadly volleys into our vanguard.

What the Austrians had suffered during the earlier part of the morning our people were suffering now, only on a more fearful scale.

Yet we gathered from the messenger that they had not retreated a foot, though it was impossible for them to advance.

Our sole hope now lay in Prince Leiningen and the reserve which he commanded.

Klapka had already sent to him, and now Szondi returned with the infor-

mation that the prince was advancing with reckless bravery against the Austrian left.

Görgei could no longer contain himself. Go forward he must; go forward he would; and if his wound burst out afresh and killed him, as the doctors feared, well--he would not be the only man to die!

I jumped into the saddle and went with the others.

The awful cannonade continued without intermission, and every man who had ever seen a battle felt his heart sink at the thought of the havoc it was committing.

But we did not altogether ride without hope. Another messenger had found the general to tell him that the gallant Leiningen had broken the Austrian left, and we cheered the news heartily.

The story of the fight, as it thus came to us piecemeal, was a succession of ups and downs.

Ill news, it is said, travels apace; and hardly had we finished cheering when a fresh officer brought word that the Russians, by a sharp manoeuvre, had trained their guns on our reserve, and were decimating it.

Perhaps it was as well that those who forced us to waste those precious weeks before the arrival of the Russians were not on the battlefield outside Comorn.

At the Waag, at Acz, and now here, the Muscovites had actually snatched victory from our grasp.

As we plunged together into the conflict the soldiers caught sight of their gallant leader, and for a moment ceased fighting, while they rent the air with shouts of "Görgei! Görgei!"

Had it been possible to save the battle, the presence of this one man would have accomplished the feat; but it was not.

The men died willingly enough, but they could not advance in face of those awful guns.

In vain our artillerymen worked at their batteries like slaves, vainly footmen and cavalry threw themselves against the solid mass; they came back every time baffled, broken, and in sadly-diminished numbers.

Of my personal share in the fight there is little to tell.

Görgei, forgetful of his wound, threw himself into the thick of it, and where he went I followed.

Now we charged at the head of a shattered remnant of a cavalry regiment; again we were in the midst of an infantry square, encouraging the men to stand firm; then we were making a desperate attempt on a battery.

The staff had their fill of fighting for once, but to no avail.

Even Görgei acknowledged the truth at last, and reluctantly gave the order

to withdraw.

We were fairly beaten, but not routed; and the enemy had been too severely handled to follow up their success.

Taking our wounded, we retired slowly, the men, in spite of their terrible punishment, being unwilling to leave the field.

I had lost sight of Szondi in the heat of the conflict, but he returned later to the entrenchments unhurt, save for an odd scratch or two of little account.

Fortune had dealt less kindly with several of our comrades, and we missed more than one familiar face.

"That's the worst bout I've ever been in," said Szondi. "I thought at one time not a man would come out alive."

"We might as well have stayed out there," said Mizvy gruffly. "The game's up."

"Oh, come!" I cried cheerfully. "It surely isn't as bad as that!"

"Well, my young wiseacre, if you can show me one single loophole, you've more brains than I ever gave you credit for."

There was a laugh at this, but Mizvy went on sulkily, "We can't stay here--that's certain; and where are we to go? It will take 20,000 men to garrison Comorn, and what's Görgei to do with the rest? Fight Haynau and Paskewitch together?"

"There's our army in the south," I began, but Mizvy pulled me up.

"Army in the south!" he echoed scornfully; "why, Bern, brave old fellow as he is, can hardly hold his own head above water!"

"But there's Dembinski. He'll make a big effort to join us."

Mizvy looked at me with a grin. "Dembinski's off to Szegedin with the Diet," he said. "It's a handy place to slip over into Turkey from, when the crash comes."

Several of the officers cried "Shame!" but Mizvy took this mark of displeasure with admirable coolness.

"All right," he said quietly. "But just wait till any of those fellows venture north."

"What then?" I asked, laughing.

"Why, then you can sew me up in a sack and drop me into any river that's handy!"

"We'll do that with pleasure," said Szondi. "But there's the general beckoning to you."

Mizvy took himself off, but he left an unpleasant sensation behind him.

He was a level-headed man, with plenty of shrewd sense, and having no prejudices to warp his judgment.

I am not sure that personally he cared the toss of a button for either Görgei or Kossuth, the constitution of '48, or independence; but he was a thorough soldier, and did care very much about beating the enemy.

In his eyes, a man's chief if not sole merit lay in his ability to win battles, and I remember hearing him more than once unfold his pet theory about the treatment of generals.

Mizvy had little sympathy with unsuccessful leaders, and his scheme would hardly have proved popular amongst men of weak minds; yet, as Szondi often pointed out to scoffers, promotion would become rapid.

The foundation of the theory was that no responsible officer should ever be beaten; if he so far forgot himself, the authorities were to have him shot, and give his command to another.

"Cruel?" growled Mizvy, when a listener offered that objection. "Not half as cruel as the present system. It would soon weed out all the duffers, and the peacocks, whose only idea of soldiering is to strut about in gold lace. Now, here's a fellow--goodness knows where he comes from, but he has influence; give him a brigade, and set him to do something. Back he comes in a day or two with a handful of men; the enemy has accounted for the others. He wouldn't do that trick often, if you shot him the first time. Think a second duffer would want to fill the vacancy? Hardly. None but the best men would try to get the pick of the berths in my army, I can tell you."

Mizvy was not exactly popular with his fellows, but he was a man whose opinions claimed some attention, and his remarks concerning our allies were far from comforting.

We did not dream for an instant, of course, that any of them would be frightened, but at the same time there were various little matters concerning which we felt doubtful.

Nicholas Szondi summed up the case very clearly.

"There's no question of Bern's courage," he said, "or of Dembinski's either; but we needn't pretend they're in love with Görgei, or he with them. Now, if we joined forces--and that's the only way to save Hungary--we should only want one chief."

"Well, Görgei isn't likely to yield his command to the Poles."

"Just so; and they won't be too eager to serve under him. That's where the difficulty lies."

"If old Mizvy's plan were in working order," said one man lazily, "'twould save a lot of bother at present."

"We certainly shouldn't suffer from having too many generals."

Szondi agreed laughingly. "Görgei and Klapka look very solemn over there."

"They're discussing the new plans, and it's my belief we shall find Mizvy wasn't far out in his forecast."

That same night our general told us he had resolved on retreating to Waitzen with a portion of the army, while Klapka, with 76 guns and 18,000 men, was to

throw himself into Comorn.

I now learned that one Austrian army corps was marching straight on Pesth, from which our troops had withdrawn, and I looked forward with pleasure to again meeting my old friends of the 9th Honved regiment.

Since joining the staff I had not heard from Rakoczy, but as there had been no fighting at the capital I concluded he was still alive and well.

Early on the morning succeeding the stubborn fight we said farewell to our friends in Klapka's division, and before it was really light began the march.

Two days later, having picked up various bodies of troops on the route, we halted a few hours' distance from Waitzen.

Here the 9th Honveds were assembled, and as soon as the general had finished with me, I rushed off to find Rakoczy.

I really don't know which of us was the more pleased at the meeting, though the genial colonel could not forego his chaff, and pretended it was a great honour to receive a visit from one of the staff. Then he took me into his tent and sent for Dobozy, from whom I had another warm welcome.

"The accounts from the front frightened us a bit," said Dobozy. "We began to think you would have been better off in Pesth."

"Been pretty warm, hasn't it?" asked Rakoczy. "But there, you shall tell us all about it. You must be getting pretty used to playing a losing game by now, eh?"

"Still, I don't know that I like it any better than at first. By the way, have you seen Count Beula lately?"

"Cleared out the same time as Kossuth. Paid you a visit at Raab, didn't he?"

"Yes, with a proclamation from the Diet in his pocket. But I had better begin at the beginning, and tell you the story properly."

"Much better. Make yourself comfortable. You may be sure of an interested audience, though a small one."

He was right in that remark, for both he and Dobozy listened most attentively, only interrupting by an occasional exclamation.

"You certainly can't complain of having been dull yonder," said Rakoczy at the finish.

"Did you kill that Von Theyer fellow?" asked Dobozy.

"I hope not, though I'm afraid he got a nasty slash across the face."

"Pity that, being a handsome sort of chap. 'Twill spoil his beauty."

"In that case," said the colonel, "our friend Botskay must take care of himself. This Von Theyer, though a splendid soldier, is vainer than any woman, and he won't easily forgive the man who disfigured him."

"Aren't we getting on a bit too fast? The fellow may be dead and buried, for aught I know. When our troopers came back from the Russian guns, they didn't

give me too much time for investigation."

"That Russian division seems to be the mainstay of the army."

"It has been, so far; but now tell me what you've been doing in Pesth."

"Putting the regiment straight again," said the colonel.

"And forming guards of honour," added Dobozy. "We've had a very pleasant and agreeable time."

"A wonder you left."

"We had such very pressing invitations to leave that the colonel could hardly refuse. The Diet, you know, has gone to Szegedin with the army of the north."

"Yes. We heard that."

"Well, directly Haynau had you beaten up yonder, he sent an army corps hot-foot for Pesth. At the same time Paskewitch dispatched a Russian corps from the east, and we thought it time to move."

"How was it you didn't go south with the others?"

"Because, fortunately, we had orders to join Görgei here."

"Shall we make a stand at Waitzen?"

The colonel shook his head. "May stay for a bit of a fight," he replied. "Nothing more."

"Then what do you think Görgei will do?"

"Retreat through the mountains, and threaten to strike at Galicia. That will bring Paskewitch back in double quick time, and Dembinski will have only the Austrians to tackle. Oh, we shall lead them a lively dance yet!"

"If we aren't caught here," said Dobozy, "which seems rather likely."

"I see you are still wearing the baron's ring," remarked Rakoczy, as I rose to go.

"Yes. I thought it would be as safe on my finger as anywhere else, till I am able to take it to Vienna."

"Unless you happen to be badly wounded and left on the field. There are a good many prowlers who would willingly finish you for the sake of a stone like that."

"They would be counting without Mecsey Sándor, who follows me everywhere like a dog; but I really must go now. We shall move again at daybreak;" and, bidding my two friends good-bye, I walked across to the general's quarters.

The first man I met was Nicholas Szondi, who had just returned from a long ride with Nagy Sándor.

"Better get a bit of supper and a nap while you've the chance," he said. "We're likely to be off before long."

"Anything serious?"

"Only that the Russian cavalry are close at hand."

"Then we're in for another fight?"

"I expect so, unless the general prefers to run."

Taking my comrade's advice, I had some supper; and wrapping my mantle around me, I lay down to snatch an hour's sleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

SENT SCOUTING.

As Szondi had predicted, reveille sounded before day had fairly broken, and an hour after dawn the whole army moved to the ridge of low hills outside the town of Waitzen.

Here we halted, and immediately set to work making our position as strong as possible. The artillery was posted on the hills, earthworks were hastily thrown up, extra ammunition was served out, and everything prepared to give the enemy a warm reception.

Most of the work was finished when Görgei's scouts came in with the information that the Russian cavalry, supported by an infantry brigade, was approaching.

"They're just come to have a look," said Szondi cheerfully. "They aren't likely to attack till their main body arrives."

This was the general opinion, and we could hardly believe our senses when the Russians were seen preparing for an assault. I suppose it was a very gallant action, but it certainly had not the slightest chance of success from the beginning.

On our side the battle was fought by the artillery, and the bravest cannot stand before a cannon-ball.

Again and again the Russians charged desperately, only to be hurled back in utter confusion; and at length their leader admitted his mistake by drawing his men off altogether.

"So far, so good," remarked Rakoczy, with whom I spent half an hour that evening, "but we mustn't expect to win so easily to-morrow."

"I thought we should probably slip away during the night."

"That's possible, of course; but I fancy Görgei intends trying to hold the town. However, we shall see before long."

The Russians had been so badly beaten that they made no further effort to

molest us, and the night passed away peacefully.

Nor did they renew the struggle in the early morning, but waited for the arrival of the main body, which had made a forced march of eight German or forty English miles in twelve hours.

"They make a fine show," exclaimed Szondi, as we stood on a hill with the general, watching the heads of the columns as they approached.

"They make stubborn fighters," growled Mizvy.

"Just like dogs," added another fellow: "as long as you whistle them on, they'll go."

These Muscovites were indeed wonderful soldiers, and far different from our own men.

The Magyars were full of fire and dash. They rushed to death with a cheer and a shout, or to the rattle of a song. When the warning blast rang out, their faces flushed, their eyes burned with a fiery glow, the hot blood sped more swiftly through their veins--they were real live human beings.

On the other hand, it seemed to us, as we gazed from the hill, that there were no individual Russians--only companies, or regiments, or brigades.

It was a weird sight to witness one of these regiments, compact and grey-coated, come gliding up towards the guns.

As Szondi put it, one forgot the men in watching the movements of the machine.

It advanced silently, steadily, and in one piece; it--not they--moved faster; suddenly a curious shiver passed through it, a curtain of smoke was spread over it, and presently you saw the one piece, only very much smaller, moving back again, leaving bits of grey lying here and there, as if chipped from the mass.

Farther along, another machine, similarly constructed, was going through exactly the same performance, becoming smaller in the same manner.

One such I saw more distinctly still, having carried a message from the general to the artillery chief just as it approached.

The fate of that regiment was so terrible that even now I sometimes shudder at the remembrance.

Like the others, it came on regularly and without noise. The great guns at my feet roared out as if in fright; the smoke cleared away, showing the grey mass diminished in size, but nearer; the guns cried out again, the smoke-cloud settled and lifted, discovering the grey mass very much smaller, but still moving nearer, until at length it reached the very muzzles of the guns, and then--well, then it simply vanished!

Some parts of it doubtless returned in safety, though to me, watching from behind the cannon, it seemed as if the whole body had been swept away.

Yet, although the Russians lost men so terribly, it was plain that in the end

they would be able to oust us from our position, and our chief began to make arrangements for the retreat. Owing to this, I saw little more of the battle, having been sent into Waitzen by the general.

Here, while our comrades held the Muscovites back, we were sending off the sick and wounded, provisions, ammunition, and the troops that could be spared from the fighting.

From time to time we heard news of the combat, which grew fiercer with every hour; yet, in spite of the most furious assaults, the Magyars stood their ground.

"The men must hold the field till dark," was the order passed round to the different leaders; and Görgei knew that, whatever happened, it would be obeyed.

During the early part of the afternoon the noise of the battle died away, but the lull was only for a time. The uproar began again, increased in volume, and came so near to us in the town that we thought the enemy had carried the defences.

They had indeed got to hand-to-hand fighting, being repulsed only after a desperate encounter.

How our poor fellows out there on the ridges must have prayed for the coming of night!

Meanwhile, carts and wagons were rolling through the town and away into the mountainous country beyond.

Once riding out with some special message to the general, I found him standing with his arms behind his back and his head bent forward, surveying the fight.

The bullets were dropping around, but of these he took no notice, though two of the staff had already been seriously hurt.

"Lucky fellow!" remarked Szondi, as I repassed him on my way back. "You're well out of it;" and, seeing how the general was exposing himself, I thought so too.

I could not see the 9th Honveds--they were somewhere on the left--but I earnestly hoped my two friends were safe.

Once more the fury of the battle lessened. It was growing dusk, and even had the light lasted, neither side could have fought much longer.

The Russians naturally were the more fatigued, but when the last shot was fired many of our own fellows sank down exhausted.

Yet the general could grant them but small time for rest.

Many, indeed, tired and hungry as they were, marched straight off the ground. All the night through, the streets of Waitzen echoed to the tramp of infantry, the rumbling of baggage-wagons, the clatter of horses' feet, and the roll of artillery.

Hour after hour, while the Muscovites lay wrapped in peaceful slumber, the

sad procession filed through the town, and daylight revealed to the astonished enemy only an abandoned camp.

It was night before I learned anything of Rakoczy; and then, to my great joy, I discovered that both he and Dobozy were unhurt.

Our position had now become practically hopeless.

The allies had joined hands in the centre of the country, while our armies were scattered in all directions, and completely out of touch one with the other.

Bern still battled hard in Transylvania; Dembinski was on the borders of Croatia; while we, trudging through the lower spurs of the Carpathians, were separated from both by over 100,000 veterans.

Rakoczy and a few of his stamp still put on a brave show, talked cheerily to their men, and prophesied that Dembinski was about to do great things; but most of the officers privately admitted that our final defeat was certain.

Görgei himself shared this view, though it did not prevent him from doing all in his power to avert the calamity.

"We're bound to draw the Russians after us," he said cheerfully, "and that will take them from Dembinski's shoulders. If only we can outmarch the Russians and join the Pole anywhere near Debreczin, there may still be a chance."

But could we?

That was a question time alone could answer.

One corps was toiling hard after us through the mountains, but what was Paskewitch doing with the rest of his army?

One morning, about the fifth day of the retreat, the general suddenly told me to go and find where the Russian chief was, and what he was doing.

"The reports of the scouts are very unsatisfactory," he said. "I can't make head or tail of them. Just find out all you can for yourself, and catch me up at Miskolcz."

Taking Mecsey Sándor with me, as he knew the country much better than I did, I started immediately, being in a short time out of sight and sound of the retreating army.

Knowing that Paskewitch had stopped his southward march, we concluded he would try to prevent Görgei crossing the Theiss.

My best course evidently was to ride due south, questioning the country people as I passed.

"We shall learn something at Gyongyos," said Mecsey, "and we ought to reach there by nightfall."

It was a dreary and disheartening journey. Of men we saw hardly a sign; only women and children remained in the little villages, or worked hard in the fields to save the ripening crops from destruction.

These poor people could tell me nothing of the enemy. They only knew that

their own men-folk were far away fighting for the land of their birth, or haply already lying at peace beneath the sod.

Evening fell before we reached Gyongyos, but I resolved to push on in the gathering darkness, although Mecsey very much doubted if we could find the way.

At the village of Kis-Palaty we learned that the Russians were in the neighbourhood, but whether they constituted an army or only a scouting party it was hard to tell.

Here, as elsewhere, the population consisted of women and children, and a few old men who shook their heads sadly, and mumbled words that had no meaning.

After a long talk with the most intelligent of the women, I came to the conclusion that the enemy were simply a cavalry detachment out scouting. Then came the question what was best to be done.

It seemed equally dangerous to go or stay, and I was still turning the question over in my mind when a man on a splendid horse galloped up to the inn door.

His speech told me he was a Magyar, and by his dress I judged him to be a servant in some nobleman's family.

At first he glanced at us suspiciously; but, discovering I was an officer in Görgei's army, he became very friendly, and answered my questions readily enough.

"You cannot venture into Gyongyos," he said. "The town is filled with Russians. The general is there with his principal officers, but I hear they start for Kapolna in the morning."

"Will they come this way?"

The Magyar shook his head. "No," he replied; "I wish they would. It would keep them clear of my master's estate."

"Is your master with our army?"

"Alas, no! My sweet master is a cripple, paralyzed. He never leaves the house. But why not ride there with me? The count, my master, is a great patriot, and will make you welcome."

"But it might lead him into trouble."

"Not at all. The Russians are not likely to pay us a visit. If they do, we can easily hide you."

"And Paskewitch will march that way?"

"The Russian general? Yes; the highroad passes the edge of the pine-wood. You had better come. The count thinks a great deal of General Görgei, and will be delighted to see one of his officers."

"You have not told me who your master is."

"Count Arnim Kemeny."

"Well, Mecsey," I said, "what do you think? Shall we be likely to run the count into any danger?"

"How? The Russians will be gone to-morrow."

"Then if you will ride on," I said to the servant, "we will follow."

"In one minute. I have a little business to transact first," and making a respectful bow, he went into the house.

"All right, Mecsey?" I asked.

My servant tapped his pistol significantly. "I'm sorry for our friend if it isn't," he answered.

When the count's man came out again it was quite dark, and we had some difficulty in following him over the execrable roads. It was even worse when, leaving the highway, he struck across country; but after a couple of hours' hard riding we arrived at his master's residence.

We rode into the courtyard amidst the barking of numerous dogs; but the servant silenced them, and several men came running quickly to take charge of our horses.

Then our guide led the way to the front of the house, and ushered us into a small room which served as an ante-chamber.

"I go to inform my mistress," he said, and in two or three minutes there entered the room one of the loveliest women in Hungary. She was a brunette, with a complexion so clear that the warm blood could be seen beneath the delicate skin. Her hair was beautifully wavy, her eyes were large and shaded with long, silky lashes, her lips red as a rose, her teeth glistened like pearls.

She greeted me with ease and graciousness, and I knew in a moment that the welcome was a genuine one.

"I must apologize for my husband," she said sweetly. "He is, alas! an invalid, and I must welcome the guests of the house."

"It is I who should apologize for thus intruding," I replied, "but that I see it will not be necessary. I am George Botskay, a captain in the army commanded by General Görgei. This is my servant, and we are in the neighbourhood on special duty."

"Exactly," said my hostess, "and you must be in need of refreshment. Supper is almost ready, and meanwhile you would like to go to your room."

Mecsey was now handed over to the care of our guide, and a servant conducted me to a bedroom, where I was able to make myself more presentable.

The house was a one-storied building, very similar to my own at Gyula--built on much the same plan, but rather more extensive.

After I had washed and dressed, a servant showed me to the dining-room--a fine, spacious apartment, the walls of which were hung with pictures painted by Hungarian artists.

As before, the countess stepped forward, smiling, and led me to her husband.

"Arnim dear," said she sweetly, "this is Captain Botskay, whom a lucky chance has sent us as a guest."

While she spoke, I gazed with the deepest emotion at the count.

He partly sat, partly reclined in a wheeled chair drawn close to the table.

He was a wonderfully handsome and athletic-looking man, with a massive, well-shaped head firmly set on broad, sturdy shoulders. His face was frank and open, his eyes smiled, though with a suggestion of sadness, his mouth was firm, his chin square and determined.

I pictured him charging at the head of a squadron of horse, and thought what a magnificent cavalry leader he would make. As it happened, the poor fellow could not cross the room, could not put foot to the ground, could not move a single muscle of his legs; from the waist downwards he was practically dead. Yet he made no moan, no complaint, but once, and then it was to regret that his infirmity prevented him from joining Görgei.

"Forgive my apparent lack of courtesy, Captain Botskay," said he; "but I am somewhat of an invalid, and my wife kindly does the honours of the house in my stead."

"I shall not readily forget madam's kindness," I replied.

"Nay," answered the countess, "it is we who are your debtors, since you will be able to tell my husband the truth about the war; but first we will have supper," and she rang the bell.

I was certainly very hungry, and did ample justice to the good things placed before me, while the pleasure was heightened by the appearance of the table with its cloth of snowy whiteness, beautifully-cut glasses, nicely-chased silver, and tastefully-arranged flowers.

This was unusual experience for a soldier in Görgei's army while on active service.

It was delightful also to watch how fondly my hostess waited on her crippled husband, how swift she was to anticipate his wants, how lovingly she performed every little service--every action showing how thoroughly the invalid was centered in her heart.

Then, when we rose from the table, it was her hand that guided his chair into the drawing-room; her pretty fingers that made him comfortable; her eyes that looked lovingly into his, questioning if there was aught else that could be done for him.

On his part, the count worshipped this beautiful woman who thought only of him. His eyes followed her everywhere; and when, drawing forward a cosy chair, she sat down beside him, his face lit up with a smile of sweet content.

Of course I was pleased to find the count was of my way of thinking, and had no sympathy with the republican party.

He listened with the greatest interest to the story of the campaign, and asked several questions which showed he was not ignorant of military matters.

"Görgei has made a wonderful fight of it," he remarked; "but, in my opinion, he can do very little more. This Field-Marshal Paskewitch is a clever general, and, from what I hear, he has an overwhelming number of men."

"That is what I wish to find out. Your man tells me they will be en route again to-morrow."

"Nicholas is generally right, and in that case you will have a fine chance of obtaining your information with little risk. A quarter of a mile away the wood stretches right down to the main road. The trees are close together, and just now, of course, are in full leaf. One in particular, which we generally speak of as the Eagle's Nest, would afford you fine shelter, and from it you could see everything which passed. It will be a tedious affair, but--"

"Oh, that's nothing!" I exclaimed quickly. "The only thing I'm afraid of is a chance visit of the enemy to you. My horse would tell tales, and there is my man to be considered."

The count looked at his wife and smiled.

"Do not fear for us," said she. "We have hiding-places here that would not be discovered even if they burned the house down."

"The trappings of the horses can be put in one of these," added the count, "and in case of danger we can put your servant there as well."

"But if they find me in the Eagle's Nest?"

"They will shoot you and ask no questions, so I hope you'll not be discovered."

After a little further conversation it was arranged that my host's servant should call me at daybreak, and take me to the Eagle's Nest before the Russians began their march.

Mecsey was to remain at the house, as he could not be of any use in the tree, and might possibly do harm by attracting attention.

Having settled this matter, we sat chatting another hour, when my host said pleasantly, "Captain, I am going to play the commanding officer and order you to bed. As it is, you will have a short rest, while there is a heavy day's work in front of you. Of course, if I considered myself only, I should wish the pleasure of your company half the night."

"It's very kind of you," I answered, "and really I would rather sit here and talk, but I might feel drowsy to-morrow."

"And we do not wish you to fall out of the Eagle's Nest," said my hostess merrily.

"I fear the general would obtain little information from me afterwards."

Bidding them good-night, I went to my room, and once more enjoyed the luxury of lying down in a real bed.

As the count had observed, there was not much time for sleep, and a portion of that I wasted thinking of my host's terrible affliction and his wife's goodness.

Then, too, I wondered how the next day's adventure would turn out, and whether Görgei had been forced to stand at bay again.

At length my brain ceased working, and I fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

NEARLY CAPTURED.

I seemed to have slept scarcely five minutes when a knocking at the door wakened me, and I rubbed my eyes dreamily.

It was Nicholas, with the information that breakfast was ready; so, jumping out of bed, I quickly washed and dressed.

In spite of the early hour, the countess had risen to see that I had a comfortable meal, and to wish me success in my enterprise.

While I ate she superintended the packing of a wallet which was to bear me company to the Eagle's Nest, and for which, later in the day, I felt very grateful.

After a hearty breakfast I thanked my kind hostess again, and promising, if all went well, to return at dusk, joined Nicholas, who had slung the wallet over his shoulder.

The faithful Mecsey was waiting in one of the rooms through which we passed, and he begged very hard to go with me.

I would have taken him gladly, but he could do no good. There was no question of fighting or even of strategy. I had simply to sit in a tree and watch.

Nothing could save me if the Russians discovered I was there; if they did not, I was perfectly safe.

Mecsey was shrewd enough to see the reasonableness of this, but he had attached himself so strongly to my fortunes that he hated the idea of my going into possible danger alone.

He yielded at last, however, kissed my hand, and stood on the top of the

steps gazing mournfully at me as I trudged off with Nicholas.

The new day was breaking gloriously as we entered the wood; hundreds of songsters carolled gaily, and the undergrowth was alive with game.

"Your master has plenty of shooting," I remarked to my companion.

"Ah!" replied he, with a wise shake of the head, "the count has been a mighty hunter. But we must hurry; it will be broad daylight soon, and you must be in the Nest before then."

Accordingly we walked faster, Nicholas leading me by tracks well known to him and the rest of the count's household.

At last he stopped and, pointing to a giant tree, exclaimed, "There is the Eagle's Nest! Near the top you will find a snug sitting-place formed by the branches, which will give you a splendid view of the highroad."

He took off the wallet, strapped it on my back, and waited to see me climb the tree.

I had done little climbing for years, and the unusual exercise made my muscles ache; but I had not altogether lost my old skill, and gradually mounted to the spot which Nicholas had described. Perhaps it was a trifle less comfortable than his memory pictured, but in one matter at any rate he had been right--there was a splendid view of the route the Russians must take if they were trying to prevent Görgei from crossing the Theiss.

I removed the wallet, and fastened it carefully to one of the branches; then I took out the notebook which Count Kemeny had provided, and waited.

An hour passed uneventfully, and then in the west there rose up a cloud of dust, which swept towards me at a rapid pace.

It was a body of cavalry--Cossack irregulars, by the look of them--mounted on shaggy, little horses and armed with long lances.

I caught a glimpse as they dashed up, a fuller one as they passed beneath me; then the sand-cloud swept on to the east, and the van of the Russian army vanished in the distance.

Those rough, uncouth riders formed the head of a procession that occupied all the day in filing past.

It was a splendid spectacle, but my eyes grew tired of gazing at it.

Provision-wagons, baggage, ammunition, and stores were followed by field-guns, large masses of infantry, hussars, lancers, and dragoons; then more guns, wagons, foot-soldiers, and cavalry in what promised to be an interminable succession.

As they passed I calculated their numbers, making my entries accordingly; while, about noon, a sudden stoppage of the procession gave me a capital opportunity of investigating the interior of the wallet.

The halt lasted two hours, when the march began again, and evening had

fallen before the last stragglers went by.

Then I put away my notebook, strapped the empty wallet to my back, and prepared to descend.

I moved very slowly and with the utmost caution, as my limbs were terribly cramped, and I was half afraid of missing my footing and slipping to the bottom.

However, I succeeded, and found Nicholas ready to pilot me back to the house.

"Your master has not been troubled by the Russians?" I asked.

"A friendly visit from half a dozen officers," replied he; "nothing more."

"And Mecsey Sándor?"

"Kept in the background while they stayed."

Mecsey ran out from the courtyard at my approach to make sure I had returned unhurt; but once certain of that, he became stolid as ever.

"Get the horses saddled," I said, before entering the house. "We shall start soon."

"Not to-night, captain, surely?" cried my hostess, whom I had not noticed standing on the steps. "The count will be so disappointed. He has reckoned so much on your company this evening."

"And I would very much like to stay; but in a matter of duty a soldier has no choice."

"That is what Arnim feared you would say. However, you cannot go until after dinner."

"It's rather a queer way of entertaining one's guest," laughed the count as we entered--"to set him on a perch all day long. I hope you have not suffered martyrdom in vain?"

"No. Thanks to your kindness, I can take the general the fullest particulars of the enemy's force."

"And Captain Botskay wishes to go at once," said my hostess.

The count sighed. "We must not keep him," he said. "His information may be of the utmost importance to the general. But you will dine before going, captain, will you not?"

Now to this I readily consented, as it gave me a little further time with my host, for whom I was beginning to feel a warm friendship.

After dinner I sat half an hour longer, while Mecsey got the horses ready, and then I was reluctantly compelled to say farewell.

"Take care of yourself," said the count, "and come and see us whenever you have a chance. We are rather lonely here."

"Good-bye, Captain Botskay," said his wife; "and I hope sincerely that no harm will come to you in this cruel war."

I promised to visit them again should opportunity arise, and, with a last

hand-shake, joined Mecsey, who had the horses ready.

Nicholas, too, came to guide us a few miles on the road, and amidst the cheers of the domestics the three of us set off.

Mecsey and Nicholas were good company for each other. I rode a short distance behind them, wondering if I should find Görgei in time for my information to be of use.

The night was fine, calm, and still. There was no moon, but the stars glittered in myriads overhead, serving to show the route.

In those days our best roads were shocking to a stranger, but the cuts across country were simply abominable.

Several times that night I escaped a nasty--perhaps fatal--accident solely through the intelligence of my horse.

Having accompanied us five or six miles, and given Mecsey full directions as to the way, Nicholas pulled up, wished us farewell, and started for home.

"He's dreadfully afraid of leaving the count long at a time," said Mecsey. "He looks on himself as a sort of bodyguard."

"He's evidently an affectionate and faithful servant. Now, if you know the road, we'll go a little faster. The horses have had a splendid rest and plenty of corn; they ought to carry us well."

Of course there was always the danger of falling in with a detachment of the enemy's troops, but I thought this less likely to happen at night than in the daytime.

From his own knowledge of the district, and helped by some directions from Nicholas, Mecsey found the way with little difficulty, and for several hours we rode at a brisk pace over a broad plain.

Thanks to the kindness of the beautiful countess, we had plenty of provisions for man and beast, and about six o'clock we stopped for rest and breakfast.

By this time I was so tired that my eyes would hardly stay open, and Mecsey pressed me to have an hour's sleep.

"We shall save time in the end," he urged. "The animals will be fresher for an hour's rest; in fact, they won't travel much farther without."

"And what about yourself?"

"I had a long sleep yesterday."

"Then keep a good lookout for the enemy, give the horses a feed, and call me in an hour."

I lay down, drew my cloak round me, and lost consciousness almost before my head touched the ground.

Mecsey wakened me, according to promise; we then ate a hurried breakfast, and started again, now in broad daylight.

The brief halt had done me a world of good. I was much brighter, and felt

capable of riding all day.

As it chanced, however, the Russians did not give me the opportunity of trying.

We had left the great plain and entered a mountainous district when Mecsey, who was in front, suddenly stopped his horse and held up a finger in warning.

"What is it?" I asked in a whisper, getting close to him.

"Soldiers!" he answered promptly. "Russians!"

We were half-way through a narrow gorge, with huge limestone cliffs on either side of us, and with no way of escape but by going straight on or turning back.

Mecsey's sharp ears had detected the noise made by the soldiers before they were in sight.

"They are behind us," I said quietly.

"And on our right. There must be a regiment."

"Well, there's no going back, so we must keep straight on. If once we get out of the gorge they can whistle for us."

Mecsey shook his head, saying, "We can try."

This did not sound very promising; but Mecsey, though brave as a lion, was not the most cheerful of men.

"Let us go," I said. "It's our only chance."

The Russian leader, unfortunately for us, was a man who knew his business; and, before the main body of his troops marched through the gorge, he had sent a detachment along the cliffs in search of a possible ambuscade.

A loud shout and the discharge of many muskets proclaimed that we were discovered.

"Push on!" I exclaimed. "We must get through somehow."

It was a poor place for fast travelling, but we went as rapidly as our horses could take us.

The shouts from the cliffs were now repeated in our rear, and several bullets whistled unpleasantly about our ears.

Still we kept going until Mecsey came in sight of the outlet from the gorge; then he pulled up once more with a gesture of despair.

There was little need for questioning or speech of any kind; a body of grey-coated infantry was drawn across the narrow exit.

Just for one moment I thought of making a dash at these stolid warriors and trying to cut my way through; but I had sufficient sense left to recognize the madness of the scheme.

Without speaking, we turned and rode back in our tracks.

We could now see the head of the column approaching, and I felt like a rat in a trap.

The Russians, understanding how completely we were in their power, treated the matter as a rich joke, and the men on the cliffs stopped firing.

"Let me have the book for the general," said Mecsey, "and I will try to escape. If you surrender they won't harm you."

"But what can you do?"

"Leave the horse and try to scale the cliffs."

"All right. We'll both try. I mean Görgei to have that list. Swing yourself off. Now!"

I did not like abandoning the gallant animal that had carried me through so many dangers, but there was no help for it; and, indeed, I had little time to spend in regrets.

Directly the Russians saw our plan, those on the opposite cliffs discharged their muskets, while the head of the column quickened its pace.

Whiz! whiz! came the bullets, singing overhead or chipping the rocks beside us--much too near in either case for comfort.

At first we managed to dodge them pretty well behind the boulders, but we should soon have to move out into a more exposed position, and it did not require an extra amount of brains to foretell what would happen then.

However, we were having a try for our lives, and that was more satisfactory than sitting still to be killed; but we were rapidly approaching the end of our tether.

The men on the opposite cliffs could not fire now for fear of hurting their comrades, who came after us in full cry for all the world like dogs on the track of a boar.

Suddenly Mecsey's foot slipped and he fell, but he was up again in an instant.

"Hurt?" I asked anxiously.

"It's nothing," he said--"nothing. Look! Look just above us! There is a hole in the rocks. If we could get inside there we might hide."

I did look, and saw a huge fissure in the cliffs several yards in length and about six feet in depth.

Certainly it might help us, but I hardly thought so.

The soldiers would see us enter, and would follow. It was not as if they numbered only a half-dozen or so.

Still, it might be worth trying for; and we pushed on recklessly, running, climbing, jumping, scrambling--any fashion, so as to get there.

The Russians had been shouting and jabbering behind us, and it was much easier to understand the meaning of the bullets than of the words; but now the noise stopped, and a strong, clear voice shouted in German,--

"Surrender yourselves! I pledge my word that you shall not be hurt."

"Come, captain," cried Mecsey, who did not understand this offer; "here we

are. In you go. It's dark at first, but you'll soon get used to it."

"For the last time," cried the Russian officer; "will you surrender?"

We were inside the cavern now, but I showed myself at the mouth and asked for five minutes' grace.

For myself there was but one course open--to return to Görgei. Death alone could absolve me from that duty; but there was no need to sacrifice my trusty servant.

Accordingly, I told him of the Russian's offer, and urged him to accept it.

"You will save your life," I said, "and there is really no sense in your getting killed. Let me tell the Russian officer that you surrender."

Mecsey looked at me proudly. "I am a Magyar," he said, as if that settled the question.

And it did with me.

I urged him no more, but turned again to the enemy.

They, meanwhile, by command of their leader, had halted, and were gazing at us curiously. It seemed strange to them to be called off their prey at the moment of running it to earth.

The officer was well in advance, and I saw by his face that he would gladly save our lives.

"You will surrender?" he questioned; but I shook my head.

"That is stupid. You cannot escape. I shall send my men in there, and you will be-- Ach! what folly!"

"Many thanks for your offer," I said lightly, "but we must refuse. Now you are at liberty to fire," and I sprang back into the shadow.

As far as I could judge, we were in a cavern of vast extent, having a low roof; and I began to think that, after all, we stood a good chance of escaping.

It was hardly likely that a large body of soldiers would be set to search long for two runaways; and, of course, I was well aware that some of these limestone caves extended for miles into the very heart of the mountains.

Had this immense rock-chamber a second outlet?

I asked myself this question as we rushed over the damp, uneven floor, and a sharp exclamation of joy from Mecsey answered it.

Just as the Russians entered, we made our exit by way of a narrow passage, through which a stream ran.

We dashed on, followed by, perhaps, twenty of the enemy, who carried torches; the others were searching the cavern.

Gradually the passage became wider, then it contracted once more, and finally opened into a second chamber, from which two passages branched.

We had little time for choice. The Russians, yelling and waving their torches, were not far in our rear. Whatever we did must be done at once.

Mecsey was for turning to the right; but I, pointing to the stream, said, "Where that goes we can go," which was true, but not in the sense I meant.

Mecsey nodded. It was for me to give orders, for him to obey.

We ran on, with the roar of the water in our ears, the yell of the enemy behind us, but in front a chance of safety.

The Russians had traversed the narrow passage; they were in the second chamber. I looked back and saw their torches, some turning to the right, but the majority, unfortunately, keeping straight on our track.

They were creeping nearer and nearer, while Mecsey was slackening his pace.

The long ride and the absence of sleep had told upon him; he was tired; he could not keep on; surely he was stopping--had stopped. I sprang forward to catch him in case he fell, and my heart almost ceased beating.

The river had taken a sudden dip downwards and disappeared. The chamber had come to an end; we were caught.

"We can kill three or four," said Mecsey quietly.

At sight of us standing there the Russians set up a yell of triumph, waving their torches wildly; but we were not in their hands as yet.

"Mecsey," I said, "do you hear me?"

"Yes, captain."

"We've come to the end of our tether, and you must give yourself up. That's not advice, but an order from your officer. The Russians will treat you kindly; and when you are set free, carry news of me to the general and to Colonel Rakoczy."

"Where are you going, captain?"

"To Görgei or to death. I don't know which."

"I am not to fight?"

"No. Put your weapons down, and mine."

The Russian officer must have seen this performance, as I heard him calling off his men; and though I had not intended to deceive him, his mistake gave me a little extra time. This I utilized to take off my boots, a proceeding which greatly interested Mecsey; and then the Russian leader approached us.

"You have made a plucky attempt," he said in German, "but the luck is against you. Now, you yield yourself prisoner, and we will return together like good friends."

He was a nice fellow, that Russian officer, and I learned later that his courage equalled his generosity.

His German was far from good, but I understood him, and smiled.

Then, with a last word of farewell to Mecsey and a friendly gesture to my courteous enemy, I jumped into the river, which disappeared beneath the rocks.

Before striking the water I had filled my lungs with air, and it was well for

me that I had done so.

I was a strong swimmer, but strength could avail nothing in this desperate venture.

The waters seized and swept me along, whither I knew not. There was a roar of thunder in my ears; my lungs felt like bursting.

Once, and to my recollection only once, my head was above the water, and I took a good deep breath.

The black flood caught me again and rushed on, swirling and eddying, holding me helpless as an infant in its grasp. Then, when the agony became wellnigh insupportable, I was able to breathe again, and, to my astonishment, saw the blue sky above my head.

At this I tried to smile; but all was suddenly blotted out. Something seemed to take me under the shoulders, to give me a push forward, and after that I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST BLOW.

"What shall I do with this Russian, captain?"

It was Mecsey talking, Mecsey very wet and bedraggled, but prompt and soldier-like.

"Russian!" I echoed, sitting up. "What Russian?"

Mecsey pointed to a half-drowned figure at his feet, and I recognized the officer who had led the pursuit in the caverns.

"He followed us, then?" said I, in a tone of wonder, for I had not dreamed of any one being foolhardy enough to jump after me into that horrible pit.

"We came together," replied Mecsey, nearly laughing. "He leaped at my throat as I went over the side, and only loosened his hold when we shot out from the mountain."

My faithful follower now helped me to rise, and once fairly on my feet, I felt very little the worse for the adventure.

With the Russian, however, things had gone much worse, and it took us the best part of half an hour to restore him.

He was very weak and dazed, but sensible; and pointing to his jacket, said, "Vodka."

I nodded in answer, and searching his pockets discovered a flask filled with spirits, of which he swallowed a mouthful, and by signs intimated that we should do the same.

It was fiery stuff, and took away my breath; but Mecsey appeared to relish it, though it was very unusual for him to drink anything half so strong.

However, the liquor was warming, and I thought it would be well, while its effect lasted, to take our new companion on with us, believing that the exercise would the better restore his circulation.

At first he leaned all his weight upon us, but gradually his steps became firmer, and before long he walked with very little assistance. Still, it was evident he could not go far, and this made the situation awkward.

Travelling at his pace I should not reach Görgei for days, when my information would be useless; yet I could not leave the brave fellow utterly alone in a strange land, where he would be far more likely to meet with enemies than friends.

Mecsey must stay with him. I could see no solution but that, and yet I had depended on Mecsey to guide me to Miskolcz.

However, it had to be done; and at the first halt I explained the matter to the Russian.

"It is very kind of you to think of me at all," he said. "I am grateful."

"You seemed so very anxious for my society," I said, laughing, "that I am bound to take an interest in you; but, seriously, my man will remain to look after you. He is an honest fellow, and to be trusted. Of course, there is a chance of falling in with your own people. In that case, I trust you to do everything in your power to set him free."

"I promise that willingly."

"Then I will say good-bye; it is possible we may not meet again."

"I hope we shall, if only that I may have the chance to return your kindness. Will you not tell me your name?

"George Botskay."

"And mine is Michael Popkoff."

"I shall remember it; but now I must go. I am on special service; and since you have deprived me of my horse, I must do the journey on foot."

He laughed at that, and we parted very good friends.

Mecsey, of course, disliked the arrangement; but, as the only alternative was to leave the Russian to die, he loyally accepted the inevitable.

I left them there on the lonely mountain side, and set off resolutely with my face towards Miskolcz.

Mecsey believed this mountain stream which had so nearly cost us our lives flowed into the Sajo River; if so, I had but to walk along its bank--unless, indeed, it took another subterranean excursion, when it would lose my company.

It proceeded now with a rush and a rattle towards the plain, and its rocky course reminded me of my shoeless feet.

For a staff officer, I was in a pretty plight. My cap, of course, had gone; my feet were bare; I had flung off my attila with my weapons; and I was wringing wet.

The notebook was a mass of pulp, and so entirely useless that I threw it into the stream; but I had previously committed the most important facts to memory, so that its loss mattered little.

Then my thoughts wandered to Mecsey and his companion, and I could not help laughing.

My servant knew not a word of any language save Magyar; his companion, in addition to Russian, could only speak bad German, and I wondered how they would get on.

The ludicrousness of their position kept me merry for a long time; and when the stream, leaving the mountains behind, debouched into an open plain, the journey became much pleasanter.

I was now growing desperately hungry, but even in this matter good fortune stood by me, as I had the luck to stumble against a zingari encampment.

The gipsies were wretchedly poor, their tents were patched and dirty, they themselves were clothed in rags and tatters, but they had a fire and a big round pot with something savoury in it.

They did not wish to share their meal with me, and warned me off with scowling looks and surly words; but I was far too hungry to be got rid of so easily.

If they would not give me a dinner, I would buy one; and after a good deal of angry squabbling we made a bargain.

The wrinkled old dame in charge of the cooking operations ladled out enough of the hot stew to fill a huge platter, in exchange for which I gave the head man of the party my gold-braided jacket.

Elsewhere it would have been a dear dinner, but under the circumstances I was quite content.

In addition, they told me that by following the stream I should certainly come up with the army before nightfall, which was very cheering news.

These poor folk were often on the verge of starvation themselves, and they showed no surprise at the ravenous way in which I gobbled up the plateful of food.

The men sat about lazily and smoked; the women continued their labours; the naked children played their uncouth games without even a glance in my di-

rection.

When the plate was empty, I rose to go, and no one even took the trouble to say good-day.

"Lucky that Görgei is so near," I thought, "if every meal is to cost me a garment," for I was now reduced to a shirt and pair of trousers.

However, the hot food had set me up, and I walked rapidly, keeping a sharp lookout for any signs of my friends.

Afternoon had passed into evening, and darkness was falling, when an alert "Who goes there?" in Hungarian brought me to a halt.

"A friend," I answered promptly.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

"Pass the word for your officer," I said. "I am Captain Botskay of General Görgei's staff."

"Stand quite still. If you move an inch I'll shoot you."

I could not see the speaker, but his voice told me he was a man of his word, so I stood still.

Presently I heard the clatter of hoofs, and in a few minutes a party of horsemen rode up.

I guessed at once that the general was visiting the outposts, and it was no surprise to hear him calling, "Botskay, where are you? Come this way!--Bring a torch, some one. Quick!"

The light showed my strange attire, and the general, in spite of his genuine distress, could not forego his joke.

"Ach, Botskay!" cried he good-humouredly, "I'm afraid we've disturbed you. Just going to bed, eh? Here, take this," and removing the bunda which lay across his saddle, he threw it over my shoulders.

"Thanks, general," I replied gratefully. "That feels more comfortable."

"Have you brought any information? Yes?--Szondi, lend Botskay your horse. He can tell me his news as we go back."

My brother-officer jumped down at once, and I mounted in his stead.

"Now," said Görgei, as he and I rode in advance, "what have you learned?"

In reply I related how I had watched the march of the Russian army, and gave him the approximate numbers of their men, horses, and guns.

He listened very attentively, put numerous questions, most of which I was able to answer, and appeared exceedingly thoughtful.

"Well, well," he at last exclaimed, "we must do our best; but unless Dembinski joins us from the south, I don't see how we're to escape. Other three weeks, my boy, will see the end of it."

It was perfectly plain that the general's common-sense prevented him from hoping any longer, but he kept his knowledge to himself; and when, later on, we

gathered round his table for an hour, he was the life and soul of the party.

Fortunately, my personal effects were in the camp, so that I was able to join the others properly dressed, though, of course, I had to endure much good-humoured raillery.

After supper we lingered for a half-hour's chat, and the general asked me to relate the story of my personal adventures.

At the part where we abandoned the horses, Görgei exclaimed laughingly, "Now we are on the track, gentlemen. It seems to me that our friend has been hunted by wolves. First, he sacrifices the animals; then he empties his pistols; next, his servant gives up his life; then, one by one, he discards his garments to the ravening pack."

"It's the wrong time of year for wolves, general."

"Ach, so it is. Well, go on, Botskay. We're all wondering what it means."

As the story unfolded bit by bit, the fellows craned forward eagerly, being loud in their applause when I told how Mecsey and Popkoff followed me into the dark waters.

"That Mecsey is a servant worth having," said Görgei; "and the Russian proved a very plucky fellow."

"His men showed the white feather, though," growled Mizvy, who always fastened on the seamy side of things.

"I think I should have done the same," cried Szondi, with a laugh. "This underground travelling isn't much to my liking."

"Some of these Muscovites would have been none the worse for a good bath," chimed in another fellow.

"But Mecsey Sándor and the Russian--what became of them?" inquired the general.

"Oh, Mecsey saved my life;" and I told how the trusty fellow had dragged both Popkoff and myself from the river.

At the idea of Mecsey and the Russian, neither of whom understood a word the other said, being left together, they all laughed heartily, being no less amused at my method of procuring a dinner.

However, in spite of their fun, I knew they were very pleased at my safe return; and the general's "Well done, Botskay!" as I left his tent, was ample reward for what I had gone through.

Early the next morning we were again in retreat, and on the twenty-fifth of July crossed the Theiss at Poroszlo, after a sharp engagement with the Russian advanced guard, commanded by Prince Gortschakoff.

Mecsey had not yet returned, but his absence did not alarm me, as Colonel Popkoff was not in a condition to travel very fast.

During the retreat I had seen Rakoczy several times, and also Dobozy, who

had recently been made major.

The former retained his joyous spirits, came up with a cheery smile after each misfortune, and professed to believe that before long we should gain a tremendous victory, and drive both Austrians and Russians out of the country.

All this was only for outside consumption, but Dobozy assured me that the colonel really had not the slightest hope of success. In fact, a general depression settled down on the army. The soldiers began to grumble and to ask why they were fighting. The old grievance broke out afresh, and men said openly it was a folly to sacrifice their lives for a cause in which they had no part.

They were not republicans, and if Görgei had had a free hand, all they wanted would have been granted long before.

Still, they trusted implicitly in their great leader, and if he told them to fight on, why, fight they would.

Occasionally we heard accounts of Bern's gallant exploits in Transylvania, where in the face of heavy odds he astounded his opponents both by his daring bravery and his military skill.

Yet we all felt that, whatever the result of the campaign in that quarter, it could have little effect on the real struggle.

If we could join our forces with those of Dembinski, there remained a chance of striking at the Austrian and Russian armies separately, but it was as difficult to join the Pole as to avoid the enemy.

However, Görgei persevered, and, leaving Nagy Sándor to cover the approach to Debreczin with 18,000 men, continued his march, hoping by a wide circuit to deceive the Russians and reach the fortress of Arad.

There, if anywhere, we should be joined by Dembinski; and if he could not or would not meet us, we could either surrender or die where we stood.

It was, if I remember rightly, on the fourth morning after leaving the Theiss that the general sent me back in hot haste with a note for Nagy Sándor.

"Another journey, Botskay?" cried Szondi, as I rode past. "Don't forget to bring your clothes back this time."

There was a hearty laugh at this from his comrades, and one said it would be easy to track me, were I missing, by looking for my abandoned garments.

Indeed many years went by before I heard the last of that unlucky incident.

I answered their chaff in the same strain, and rode off in good spirits, though sorry that the trusty Mecsey was not with me.

Everything went well on the journey. There was no likelihood of meeting with the Russians, and my worst enemies were the bad roads.

At night I slept three or four hours in a peasant's hut, entering Debreczin about noon next day.

The city was in the greatest uproar. The people crowded the streets talking

excitedly, and the word "Russians" was on the tongue of every speaker.

Being fairly well acquainted with the district, I expected to find Nagy Sándor posted on the sandhills about a mile from and covering the town.

I had just cleared the city when a tremendous cannonade opened from the hills. It was Nagy Sándor's artillery showering grape and canister upon the enemy's advanced guard.

Spurring my horse vigorously I overtook the general, with several officers, riding to the scene of conflict.

He glanced at Görgei's note, thrust it into his pocket, told me to wait till the end of the battle, and dashed on to the hills where he had posted his masked battery.

Forty guns were belching forth canister and grape on the advancing Russians, who appeared to be taken by surprise.

They came on, however, in dense columns; but the iron hail was too much for them, and at last they went back beaten, amidst the cheers of our infantry massed behind the guns.

The advantage, however, did not remain with us long. Four heavy batteries, placed in good positions, replied to our guns, and a short time afterwards we saw the horse artillery galloping to the front.

"The odds are too great," said the man next me savagely. "The enemy must have forty against our eighteen thousand, and we shall be beaten again."

"We're getting well used to it," muttered his comrade, laughing harshly.

"Our fellows are sticking to their guns grandly for all that," I said; and indeed for several hours the cannonade continued without the Russians gaining a step.

Having no special duty to perform, I busied myself in attending to the wounded, for the enemy's fire was committing havoc in our ranks.

Late in the afternoon I again found myself near the general, who had sent off all his aides-de-camp, when I saw a movement on our right which told me that the battle was lost.

Nagy Sándor saw it too, and his face grew black as night.

"Paskewitch has brought up his reserves," he exclaimed, "and we have only a handful to oppose them. Well, we must do what we can."

He looked round for a messenger, and, seeing me, said, "Botskay, ride to the rear and tell Torot to bring up every man he has. You see that?" and he pointed to the Russian movement on our right.

I bowed, and rode off to find Torot.

Two infantry divisions, supported by four field-batteries, were preparing to attack us in our weakest place; while far away on the right a column of infantry and a division of cavalry were marching by a wide circuit towards the town.

As for us, every man except the reserve had been fighting for hours against

overwhelming odds, and there was not one to be spared from his place.

With a heavy heart I told Torot what was happening, and glanced disconsolately at his small body of troops.

"The Muscovites will swallow us up," said he cheerfully. "However, there's the order; so off we go."

I placed myself with the cavalry, and we moved out in good order from the shelter of the hills.

In the centre our guns maintained an equal conflict, but our right was terribly weakened, and incapable of resisting this fresh attack.

The poor fellows so sadly harassed greeted us with loud cheers, though really we could do little more than swell the number of dead and wounded.

I do not know who led the cavalry charge, but he was a gallant fellow and deserved a better fate.

The nearest battery was our goal, and few of us that survived will ever forget that terrible ride.

It was almost the last blow we were to strike in defence of our flag, though we did not know it then.

The colonel pointed to the battery that was dealing out death to our comrades.

"My lads," he said simply, "it is for us to take those guns."

The men shook their swords, answering by a savage cheer.

The battle had got on their nerves. They were desperate, and cared nothing at all for the fact that three-fourths of us were going to meet death.

It was the culminating point of the fight. All around rose the roar of the guns, the cheers and groans of the combatants, the tramp of rushing feet, the rattle of artillery.

A blaze of light on the left marked where a powder tumbrel had exploded. Yells of victory and defiance came from the same spot, but we rode on steadily with the fixed idea of capturing the guns in front of us.

A decimated infantry regiment, going goodness knows where, paused to cheer us; but we sped onward, gathering speed at every stride--gathering such momentum that I doubt if we could have stopped.

The colonel was a horse's length in front, going straight for the battery, when the first crash came.

The shot tore holes through our ranks, and men shrieked with pain; but the survivors never drew rein, and in an instant our dead were left behind.

At the second discharge the gallant colonel reeled to and fro in his saddle; but he kept his seat, though I knew he must be mortally wounded.

Again the guns spoke, and this time both horse and man dropped; but I took our leader's place, and still we went on like a company of mad furies.

I dared not look behind, I dared not even think. I could only shake my sword and cry "Forward!"

Then we were in the midst of the guns, slashing at the artillerymen, who fought us till the very end.

But we did what we had been sent to do, and cheered exultingly as we emerged on the other side.

Alas! that cheer was the death-knell of many.

Whiz! whiz! sang the bullets as a battalion of infantry, hitherto hidden by a depression in the ground, sprang to their feet and poured volley after volley into us.

Broken by our charge, disordered, panting, we waited a moment irresolutely, then tried to form up and return.

Only the maddest of madmen would have faced this fresh enemy.

But the horror was not yet at an end.

As we rode back, a mere handful of wearied men, a dense mass of heavy cavalry barred our path.

Flight was impossible. There were but two alternatives--surrender or death.

The Magyars chose the latter, and, gripping our swords firmly, we went straight at the grey-coated mass, and were instantly swallowed up.

There was no time for parrying of blows; we had to take our chance, and, cutting and thrusting, try to force a passage.

"Follow me, my lads! follow me!" I shouted, as long as my voice held out, but before the end of the fight I was past speaking.

I do not know how many of us got through. My head was dizzy, my sight dim. I heard a babel of sounds without being able to distinguish one, and sat my horse only by mechanically gripping the pommel of my saddle.

Then a number of black figures surrounded me; and in the midst of this, to me, phantom army I swept on into the land of darkness.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SURRENDER.

It seemed perfectly natural that the first face to meet my waking senses should be

that of Mecsey Sándor.

I was lying on a bed in a little room, rather bare of furniture, but scrupulously clean, and my trusty servant stood looking at me.

On seeing my open eyes, he placed himself at attention, made a rigid military salute, and said with all seriousness, "I am sorry to report, Captain Botskay, that the Russian officer left in my charge has been rescued by his friends."

At first I stared hard at him without understanding, then I broke into a hearty laugh that must have done me a world of good.

"Hang the Russian officer!" I exclaimed; "tell me where I am and how I came here."

"A few miles from Debreczin," Sándor answered gravely. "I found you in the town light-headed, charging a Russian battery that wasn't there."

"Where's our army?"

Sándor puckered his lips and blew; he could not have given a more significant answer.

"Then it's all over?"

"Thereabout, unless Dembinski can reach Arad. Bern's troops have been broken into little bits at Hermanstadt, and Dembinski has been chased out of Szegedin."

I groaned at this, and closed my eyes.

"General Klapka has done well, though," Mecsey continued in his stolid way.

I opened my eyes again, saying, "Klapka is shut up in Comorn."

"So the Austrians thought till the general taught them better. The day you were being beaten at Debreczin he came out of the fortress, smashed the Austrians, chased them to Presburg, took a thousand prisoners, thirty pieces of cannon, and enough ammunition to last him a year."

"Well done, Klapka!" I cried delightedly.

"Of course it won't make any difference in the end," said Mecsey composedly; and his words were like a douche of cold water.

"Go away, you rascal!" I cried. "But no; tell me first what became of Dembinski after he was driven from Szegedin."

"I don't know. Perhaps he's trying to join the general at Arad."

"If so, we still have a chance. Now help me to dress; we must find our way back to the army."

"Not to-day," replied Mecsey, "nor to-morrow. The next day, perhaps, if you're stronger. Just at present, twenty miles in the saddle would leave you weaker than a child."

This was perfectly true, and I let Mecsey have his own way.

So for three days longer I lay in my comfortable bed, waited on by Mecsey and the good woman of the house, whose husband and two sons were in Görgei's

army--at least she hoped so.

Then, early in the morning of the fourth day, we set out to ride to Arad by a circuitous route, as the main road was barred by the Russians.

The people of the villages, who freely gave us food and shelter, were filled with strange rumours which totally contradicted one another.

At one place we heard that Kossuth was at Arad with Görgei; at the next it was believed he had fled into Turkey. Each man, I think, believed the report which best fitted in with his inclination.

At last we struck the trail of Görgei's army, and all our informants agreed that the fearful forced marches had told on the troops terribly.

They were short of provisions and forage; the men were half-starved, the horses like skeletons.

This we learned from the villagers, while I knew for certain there could be but a small supply of ammunition.

Then shock followed shock in quick succession. Dembinski, who had never tried to reach Arad at all, was totally defeated by the Austrians under the walls of Temesvar, which had held out against part of our forces for one hundred and seven days.

Following this came the news that Kossuth had resigned his office and fled, leaving Görgei to act as he thought proper.

"That's a good dodge," said Mecsey. "Our general's bound to surrender unless he wants all his men slaughtered; and then everybody will throw mud at him--call him a traitor, very likely."

I laughed at this prophecy, little dreaming how my heart would ache at its fulfilment.

Long afterwards Rakoczy told me that my servant was far from being alone in his foresight.

Many gallant officers thought the general should refuse to be made the figure-head, now that everything was in ruins; but Görgei was a true patriot. He thought of the welfare of his distracted country, and manfully threw himself into the breach.

He had sacrificed everything for his countrymen; now he was prepared to lose even their goodwill and esteem.

The chance had come too late. Paskewitch, with his two corps of veterans, was pressing on one side; General Luders barred the way into Transylvania; Görgei's old opponent, Schlick, at the head of the Austrian advanced guard, was hurrying from Temesvar to hem him in, and there was none to help.

On the twelfth of August he wrote a letter to the Russian general, offering to capitulate, and laid it before his chief officers, who sorrowfully acknowledged that nothing else could be done, unless they were willing to fight a battle which

would be only a massacre.

These details were told me later by Rakoczy, for at the time of their happening I was riding with Mecsey over villanous by-roads to Arad, and only arrived on the morning of the thirteenth of August, the date fixed for the surrender.

Mecsey urged me to turn back at once; but although I could do no good, I determined to proceed to Vilagos, where the laying down of arms was to take place.

As it chanced, a robe which Mecsey had procured completely hid my uniform, and I was wearing a kalpag--a round fur cap ornamented by a white heron's plume.

Crowds of peasants swarmed in the country roads, while people of higher degree rode on horseback or in light latticed-side wagons to witness the mournful spectacle.

And it was mournful in the extreme.

To a high-spirited nation this blow was almost worse than death.

Hardly a word was spoken among all the sad company. Women wept, strong men bowed their heads and shuffled along like felons. Even I, who loved Görgei, felt a spasm of indignation that he had not chosen to sacrifice his country rather than consent to such humiliation.

Yet the sight of his broken army showed he could have done nothing else.

Ragged, shoeless, half-starved, without ammunition, exhausted by hundreds of miles of terrible marching, hemmed in on all sides by the victorious enemy, what could these brave fellows have done?

There was only one answer, which came from a woman--hardly more than a girl, in fact--who stood near me.

"They should have died!" she cried passionately. "I have a brother and a sweetheart over there, and I would willingly have lost them to spare our country such disgrace."

A murmur of applause arose from the bystanders, and when one--an old man who had seen many years and much sorrow--ventured to object, I thought the crowd would have torn him in pieces.

The disputes, the endless squabbles, the different aims of the insurgents, the bitter enmity between the national party and the republicans, were all forgotten in this sad hour.

"O land of the Magyars! land of the Magyars! that it should ever come to this!" cried another woman in heart-breaking accents. "I would give husband, father, brother, sons, everything to wipe out this eternal shame from my native land!"

"And cry your eyes out for them afterwards!" exclaimed Mecsey roughly. "What good will twenty thousand dead men do Hungary? Let them live, woman,

and bide their time. The turn of the black and yellow dogs will come."

This plain talk would have provoked disorder; but just then our attention was distracted by the sight of Görgei riding alone to meet the Russian general.

He was simply dressed, the only bit of colour being the collar of gold braid attached to his brown blouse. His heavy riding-boots reached above the knee, and he wore a round black hat, with a waving white feather.

The staff followed, conspicuous in short green attilas, with heavy gold trimmings, and with herons' plumes in their hats.

The Russian leader, similarly accompanied, advanced from his lines, and we watched the two generals exchange hand-clasps.

I sat my horse and gazed spellbound while they talked, pitying the chivalrous Görgei from my heart.

Meanwhile, the Hungarian troops were still marching to their appointed places, while the Russian army stood in two long lines on the plain of Vilagos.

The conference between the leaders ceased; they returned to their posts, and we waited impatiently for the end.

At length all was ready. The Magyars were drawn up in two lines opposite their Muscovite foes--the infantry in the first, with the cavalry on the wings; the artillery in the second.

Once again Görgei and his staff rode to the front, where the Russian generals met them.

[image]

"Görgei and his staff rode to the front, where the Russian generals met them." Page 338]

The two leaders saluted, and then along the whole line sounded the beating of drums.

My eyes ached, my brain grew dizzy, my heart throbbed violently as I strained forward, eagerly watching.

That rolling of drums was the death-knell of all our hopes.

At its signal the Russians presented arms, proudly but not vaingloriously, and then--

There was a low wail, a cry of despair from the spectators, an outburst of grief such as I had never heard, shall never hear again.

Strong men shook with grief, women sobbed as if their hearts were broken, as our gallant infantry laid their useless weapons on the ground, the cavalry on their saddles.

As for me, I crouched low, hiding my face in my horse's mane.

I have known much of happiness since then, but no joy has ever effaced the impression made on that sorrowful day.

Even now, as I sit dreaming many years after the event, the picture rises before me fresh as ever.

With eyes open or shut, I see as in reality the pyramids of muskets; the cannon drawn close together, and without gunners; the dismounted cavalry, with their swords on the pommels of their saddles; the loved flags and standards, that had fluttered so proudly on many battlefields, lying in the dust.

I see the glorious red, white, and green stripes dirty and in rags, and think of the one that wraps all that remains of my gallant brother. I see the thousands of brave men who have fought and bled for Hungary, now disarmed and impotent, but still undaunted even in that hour of bitterness.

Then again the rolling of drums pierces my ears, and I see the breaking of the ranks as the men, under strong escorts, are marched off to their various destinations.

I hear, too, the first whisper, which afterwards swelled into a loud roar, that Görgei is a traitor, and has sold his country to the Russians. My ears burn like fire, and I blush for my countrymen.

It is not given to us to probe the secrets of the human heart, and I was absent from my general in the latter days; but I had marched with him, toiled with him, fought at his side, seen him go again and again to almost certain death, in order to rally his failing soldiers, and I judge a man by his actions.

But my dreams run away with me. I must return to that sorrowful evening of August 13, when Mecsey, plucking at my sleeve, brought me back to real life.

"It's all over," he said brusquely; "and now that the prey is secured, the Austrian jackal will come to pick the bones."

"The Austrians will not dare," I began; but he stopped me with a mirthless laugh.

"Görgei has saved the army at the expense of the officers," he said. "There will be a fine feast of death before long."

These words added to my misery, for I thought of my light-hearted friend Rakoczy, and wondered if he would be counted amongst the victims.

I expressed my fears to Mecsey, who promptly proposed that we should discover where the colonel had been taken.

This, however, was more easily said than done, as we soon found.

Russian troops in charge of their prisoners were marching in all directions, and it was impossible to scan them all.

We went about hither and thither, asking questions of the crowd to little purpose; but at length we had the good fortune to meet with a number of soldiers

belonging to the 9th Honveds, who had slipped from the ranks at the very moment of surrender.

They were all looking miserable and dejected; but one, catching sight of me, ran up eagerly.

"From the colonel, sir," he cried joyfully; "though neither of us ever expected I should have the luck to meet you."

He took a folded paper from his pocket, and I pounced on it quickly. Here, no doubt, was the very information we sought; but in this I was disappointed.

The dear, unselfish fellow, indifferent to his own fate, had used the last moments of his freedom to send me a warning.

"Look out for yourself," the note ran; "your name alone will get you into trouble. Give Gyula [that was my home] a wide berth till the wolves are gorged.--J.R."

Not a word either of hope or fear for himself; all his cares were for me.

That was just like "John the Joyous," and my eyes were dim as I placed the paper in my pocket.

The faded characters, barely legible now, meet my eyes as I write; for that scrap of soiled paper remains one of my most sacred treasures, and it lies in a little golden casket on my desk.

"Have you found him, captain?"

The speaker was Mecsey, and when I shook my head sadly he immediately began to question the soldiers.

Here, again, we were at fault. No one really knew where the colonel was, some asserting he had been taken to Gros-Wardein with Görgei, others saying he had gone south with his regiment to Nagy Kikinda.

We spent another hour in questioning various men who had escaped from Vilagos, but could gain no news of the colonel, though several stated positively that the 9th Honveds had marched southward under a strong escort.

Then I held council with Mecsey, and we decided to separate, he to reconnoitre Gros-Wardein, while I followed my old regiment. At the end of a week we were to meet again at Arad, by which time it was likely that one of us would have discovered my missing friend.

"Good-bye, captain," said Mecsey, grasping the hand I held out to him, "and take the colonel's advice. It's easier to get into an Austrian prison than out of one."

"All right, my trusty fellow; I shall keep my eyes open, though I'm not tall enough for the Austrians to cut down."

So we parted, guessing little of the events which would happen before we met again.

Night was fast closing in by now, and in the darkness I missed the bridge over the Maros River, which made me lose nearly two hours, and prevented me

from striking the trail of the 9th Honveds.

However, I found the bridge at last, and, crossing to the other side, pursued my way at hap-hazard as long as my horse could keep going; then I sat down by the roadside and waited for the morning.

At sunrise I started again, leading the animal by its bridle, until a lucky chance brought me to a village.

It was a small place, containing not more than twenty houses at the outside; but it boasted an inn, where I might haply procure food for myself and horse.

Four men dressed in peasants' clothes, but having a distinctly military bearing, sat on the "word-bearer"--the bench placed against the wall of most Hungarian country houses--gossiping. At sight of my uniform (for I had unfastened my mantle) they sprang to their feet and approached me with bare heads.

My suspicions were at once verified, and I exclaimed, "You have done well, my lads. A free Magyar is worth more than an imprisoned one. Only, should the Austrians pass through, slouch your shoulders and stoop a little; you bear the marks of the drill-sergeant too plainly."

They smiled at one another, and one taking my horse led it through the courtyard into the stable behind the inn.

Another spoke my name, and though I could not remember their features, they claimed to belong to the old regiment.

He who had attended to my horse was the keeper of the inn, which he now respectfully invited me to enter.

Bidding the others come too, I questioned them concerning their colonel, while the hostess prepared a meal.

Fate was, perhaps, against me, for they could tell little beyond what I already knew.

The 9th Honveds had passed through in the night without a halt, and all the country round was covered with our disarmed troops marching to prison in charge of their Russian captors.

All this they told me eagerly; but as to Colonel Rakoczy they could tell nothing.

Naturally I was much disappointed; but comforting myself with the thought that I was at least on the track of the regiment, I made a hearty breakfast, took a look at my horse, and having sent the men to act as sentries, lay down for a couple of hours' sleep.

At the end of that time my host wakened me, and I rose, greatly refreshed by the brief rest.

My horse, too, was all the better for its food and grooming; and I mounted quite gaily, having first thanked the keeper of the inn for his kindness.

"Take care you don't run against the Austrians, captain," the man answered.

"From what I hear, their cavalry can't be far off."

"All right, my good fellow; though they aren't likely to interfere with me."

The innkeeper shook his head. He had little faith in the mercy of the Austrians.

The other men now came to say a word in parting, and then I rode slowly past the little gabled, whitewashed houses, and so again into the open country.

It was a glorious day, and under other circumstances I should have enjoyed the ride immensely; but my good spirits sank at thought of Görgei's surrender, and of John Rakoczy's personal danger.

Everywhere the people whom I met or overtook were ready to answer my questions; but the day ended without my having seen any sign of the 9th Honveds.

From time to time, however, it was told me that the Russians were in the neighbourhood; so towards night I went warily, not wishing to be taken prisoner.

Between nine and ten o'clock I entered the street of another village, and pulled up at the inn--the only house that showed a light.

A huge hound lying in the courtyard barked violently, the noise bringing out several men, who eyed me with suspicion.

Inquiring in sharp tones for the landlord, I ordered him to take my horse to the stables, and without paying any attention to the others entered the kitchen of the inn.

The men followed closely, and by the light of the candles I was able to see the kind of company I had got amongst.

There were six of them altogether, each wearing a cuirass and armed with a pair of pistols; while the room was littered with sharp lances and loaded hatchets.

The fellows stood looking at me with broad grins, as if amused at my surprise; while I, on the other hand, had more than a passing doubt as to what might be the upshot of this adventure.

It would be rather a melancholy end to my campaigning if I were knocked on the head by these "poor lads," as the country folk called the bandits, whose profession my new companions evidently followed.

Thinking the sight of my uniform might inspire respect, I unfastened my mantle carelessly; and, as I had half expected, the men at once assumed a respectful bearing.

"An officer of the staff who has escaped from the Russians!" cried one. "We must tell the chief."

"Where is he?" I asked.

"At supper in the inner room, my master."

"Then tell him Captain Botskay will be pleased to bear him company."

The man knocked at the door separating the kitchen from the next apartment, held a conversation with some one inside, and returned to say that Batori

Gabor would be happy to give me greeting.

CHAPTER XXIII.

COUNT BEULA DISLIKES HANGING.

Batori Gabor stood at the door of the inner room, and with the instinctive courtesy of the Magyar bade me welcome.

This famous brigand, who for years had lived an outlaw's life, was tall and strongly built, with massive limbs and deep, capacious chest. His face was bronzed and rugged; his black hair hung in curls over his shoulders; his eyes were dark, fiery, and searching.

He had laid aside his steel cuirass; but a brace of pistols peeped from his richly-ornamented girdle, and I doubted not they were both loaded.

"The Austrians overload me with favours," he exclaimed laughingly. "You are the second guest I am indebted to them for.--Count, I think you said Captain Botskay was an acquaintance of yours?"

Hitherto I had not noticed that Batori Gabor had a companion in the room; now I saw a man in military uniform sitting at the table.

At the outlaw's words he rose, and, turning toward me, showed the blue eyes and handsome, cynical features of Count Beula.

"This is a surprise, count," I said coldly. "I thought a clever man like yourself would by now be over the border with Kossuth."

"How strange!" he answered lightly. "I concluded you had found refuge with Görgei's Russian friends."

"Yet you are both with Batori Gabor," broke in the brigand cheerfully; "which is stranger still, since a month ago either of you would have had him shot like a dog."

"Not I, my dear Gabor," murmured Beula sweetly. "I appreciate your courage too much."

"And my knowledge of the country," added Gabor slyly.

"Well, yes. I think that may be turned to very good account, till Haynau has grown tired of his butcher's knife."

"Which will not be soon. We are, however, keeping Captain Botskay from his supper--an unpardonable offence."

Opening the door, he ordered an extra knife and fork. Then he invited me

to sit, saying, "The table's rather crowded, captain; but we have all our courses laid at once. It isn't a banquet, but you'll find it better than black bread and bacon. Help yourself. I can recommend the salmon, because one of my fellows caught it this evening. I fancy the veal has done a breadth or two of ploughing in its time; but the chicken's tender."

The outlaw certainly proved a most attentive and courteous host, and enlivened the meal by relating some of the most humorous and inoffensive of his adventures.

During the war he had turned patriot, and had really done the enemy a great deal of mischief by cutting off convoys and intercepting mounted messengers.

After supper he went to give his orders for the night; and I, not caring to remain alone with Count Beula, borrowed a lantern, and strolled out to the shed which served as a stable.

There were nine or ten horses in the place, and I noticed that saddles and bridles were all hung so that they might readily be got at.

My own animal had received an ample allowance of food, and, after a night's rest, would, I reckoned, be in capital trim.

I might have stayed longer to get a better look at the robbers' horses, but the big dog sniffed so longingly at my legs that I thought it best to remove temptation from his path.

Batori Gabor returned at the same time, and one of the band brought in some wine of a quality rarely found outside a nobleman's house.

"Been to look at your horse, captain?" he asked. "Sensible that, seeing you may have to trust your life to its speed.--Well, count, I think we may reckon on a quiet night. Andras has returned, and says the Austrians are sound asleep.

"I should feel easier if we were twenty miles farther on," answered the count.

"So should I, for that matter; but the horses were bound to have a long rest. Meanwhile we may as well make ourselves comfortable.--Captain Botskay, a glass of wine? By the way, you have not yet told us how you come to be in this part of the country. I should fancy this a very unhealthy spot for persons of your habits of life," and he laughed at his little joke quite pleasantly.

"The tale will not take long in telling," I said. "The general sent me to Nagy Sándor at Debreczin, where I had a nasty knock which laid me up for several days. Then I followed the army, arriving at Vilagos just in time to see the surrender."

"But after that?"

"I started for Nagy Kikinda, where they say the 9th Honveds have been taken."

"Looking for Rakoczy?" asked the count, and I nodded.

"You wouldn't guess what a hero our friend is," remarked the count to Batori Gabor. "He is actually risking his life on the chance of finding out what has

become of John Rakoczy, colonel of the 9th Honveds."

"Then you're a very gallant fellow, Captain Botskay," said the outlaw; "though I must stop you from playing such a mad prank. Do you know that every road in your path is barred by Austrian troops? You cannot possibly get past them; and if you could, the journey would be useless."

"Still, I intend trying."

Batori Gabor shrugged his shoulders. The count laughed in the sneering manner which always made me anxious to pitch him out of the window.

"You must be fonder of a hempen rope than I," he said; "but perhaps your name isn't on the proscribed list?"

"I don't know."

"Well, mine is."

"And mine," laughed Gabor. "It's been there for years. It doesn't hurt me in the least. I look on it as an honour."

"Every man to his taste," said the count. "I have no fancy to die in a hempen collar. I am no coward, but the thought of being hanged like a dog by these Austrian butchers puts me in a bath of perspiration."

"You came pretty near it yesterday."

The count shuddered.

"Don't," said he; "it gives me an ague fit to think of it."

I pointed out that he was probably alarming himself without reason, as the Austrians were not likely to do more than put him in prison for a few months.

Batori shook his head.

"You're wrong there, captain," cried he. "The count and I row in the same boat, and capture means death. We are to be strung up to the nearest tree or beam capable of bearing our weight by those who catch us. The very notion of it puts the count into a flutter."

Now I had once thought Count Beula a coward, and had been obliged to own my mistake; yet at this talk of Austrian vengeance his face became white, and he trembled like a leaf. He tried to laugh it off, saying that Görgei was in the right of it, surrendering to the Russians.

"He would have done a sharper thing by slipping into Turkey with Kossuth and his friends," I made answer.

"There you are," exclaimed our bandit friend. "That's what lost the war before it began. Two sets of leaders, and two objects to fight for; why, it's worse than having two captains over one band. However, it's done now, and not worth quarrelling about. We have to save our heads--a far more important matter."

"I am going to look for Colonel Rakoczy in the morning."

"Are you? Well, excuse the plain speech, captain--you're a fool. The exercise of my profession has made me acquainted with this part of the country, and even

I could not venture a mile southward without being captured. The Austrians are stopping every pass and blocking every hole; they think Kossuth is still in the district. Why, but for me, our friend here would at this very moment be swinging in the wind, and, at the best, we half foundered our horses in getting him away. However, they are recovering, and to-morrow night will see us safe. You'd better join us, and wait your chance."

"You may spare your breath," sneered Count Beula. "He'll go his own way in the end. He comes of an obstinate race."

"Well, well, we'll give him the chance to ride with us," replied Batori. "If he prefers being killed, that's his affair. Now I'm going to sleep for an hour, and advise you to do the same."

He lay down in a corner of the room, pulled his cloak round him, and in less than two minutes was sleeping soundly.

"Behold!" exclaimed the count, laughing in his detestable manner, "the beauty of possessing an easy conscience."

I made no reply, being engaged in wrapping myself up; and apparently no reply was expected.

The count was evidently in a state of great anxiety, and several times during our brief rest wakened me by passing into the next room, as if he went to see that all was right.

I could not understand the man. He was so different from the Count Beula who had displayed such gallantry at the storming of Buda. In the breach no danger had unnerved him; here he blenched at the hint of it, and I attributed the difference to his dread of being hanged.

However, in spite of his restlessness, I managed at last to fall into a sound sleep, and was dreaming that Rakoczy and I were safe at Gyula, when some one pulled me roughly to my feet.

The candles had burned out, but the dawn was stealing through the one little window, and by its light I recognized Batori Gabor. His face was flushed and excited; he had put on his cap and cuirass, had buckled on his sword, and was equally ready to fight or fly.

"Quick!" cried he, not in panic, but in such tones as you might expect from a man accustomed to carry his life in his hands. "To the stables! The Austrians are out!"

I looked for the count. He had already disappeared.

Picking up my mantle, I ran into the kitchen. It was empty, save for the frightened innkeeper and his wife, who stood half-dressed, wringing their hands and shivering.

I was rushing to the door when the man, as if in desperation, seized a piece of rope which lay in the corner and flung himself before me.

Thinking he meant mischief, I touched my sword; but his action was the effect of fear.

"My lord," he cried, "we shall be murdered. Have mercy, for the sake of Heaven, and bind us. Then they will know that we harboured the 'poor lads' unwillingly."

"You have a kind face, my sweet master," added the trembling woman; "may your heart match it."

I thought the proposed stratagem a clumsy one; but the poor people were in such deadly earnest that I took the rope and proceeded to tie the woman.

In the midst of it the door was flung open violently, and quick as thought I drew my pistol and covered the intruder.

It was the outlaw, who had come to seek me.

"Well," cried he; "of all the fools!" Then, checking himself, he got another coil of rope and bound the inn-keeper deftly.

"One makes more," said he, finishing as soon as I. "Come on. There's no time for philanthropy. The men are howling with impatience, and Count Beula's nearly off his head."

The band was mounted, and one of them at his leader's command had saddled my horse.

They looked a rough set with their lances and loaded axes and lassos, which they carried before them on their saddles.

The chief sprang into his seat; I followed suit, and off we went--Count Beula well to the fore.

I looked down the road, expecting to see the Austrians; but, thanks to Batori's sentries, we had fully two minutes' start before they appeared.

There were perhaps fifty of them, and they rode like men secure of their prey; but our horses were fresh, and, being all picked animals, easily increased their lead.

A pistol shot or two came singing after us, but without doing mischief, and Batori laughed derisively at the enemy's efforts.

"Take it easy, my lads," he shouted. "Those old screws wouldn't catch us between this and Debreczin, if we walked all the way."

This, of course, was not exactly correct; but there could be little doubt that, by putting our animals to their utmost speed, we could shake off our pursuers at almost any time.

Even Beula noticed this, and, though his face was still pale, he dropped back to us.

"Another miss of the halter, count," cried the brigand cheerfully; "you're in luck's way. But I'll tell you what it is--you set my men a very bad example;" and I fancied there was a note of anger in his voice.

The count shook off his strange fear for a moment, saying with some of his old jauntiness, "They are more familiar with the noose than I."

"Bah!" cried the robber in disgust; "if you had not gained praise from Bern, I should say you were a rank coward."

"As a bandit, perhaps I am," he replied; a remark at which Batori, instead of showing anger, only laughed.

That Count Beula could on occasion be brave as a lion I already knew, and he was yet to give me another proof.

We were, as I have said, distancing the cavalry in our rear, when a loud shout proclaimed a new and more serious danger.

The Austrians, by dividing their forces, had cleverly placed us between two fires.

A second body, instead of entering the village, had worked round to the right, and now debouched into the road in front of us; while their comrades, who had purposely held their horses back, dashed up at full speed.

The robber chief took in the situation at a glance.

"Trapped!" said he; "and in the very worst place. Smart fellow, that Austrian."

At the certainty of a desperate fight Count Beula lost his paleness. His face glowed with healthy excitement; he looked round on the band of brigands as if he were leading a regiment.

At the first sight of the enemy we had, almost without thinking, slackened our pace, and now Batori halted us altogether.

Riding to the front, he turned to his men.

"My lads," said he, "we're in a hole; but it isn't the first. You know what happens on these occasions. Those who get out will ride with me again; those who don't--" And he concluded with a pantomimic gesture which made Beula shudder.

"Elijen Batori!" shouted the bandits, and their leader smiled.

The Austrians in the rear were spurring hard; but we took no notice of them, our attention being fixed on those in front. Could we break them?

I had taken part in more than one cavalry charge against long odds, and to me the feat seemed impossible.

Batori, however, showed little anxiety; while his men were almost as cool as he was.

Sword in hand, Count Beula took his place on the right of the leader; I rode at his left.

There were no unnecessary orders. Every man knew he had to pierce that body of cavalry somehow, or be hanged to the nearest tree; and if the knowledge did not bring true courage, it at least sent every one into the fight with a

determination to get through.

The bandits couched their lances, and dug their spurs deeply into the horses' sides. Batori, who was evidently a superb horseman, rode without using the reins, having a sword in one hand and a loaded pistol in the other.

The Austrians bided their time; and, as we drew nearer, it flashed into my mind that their leader, who, but for a terrible scar across his face, would have been a handsome man, was none other than my old opponent, Von Theyer.

There was likely to be a very short shrift for me if I fell into his hands; and, unfortunately, my uniform rendered me conspicuous. However, I had little time to think about what might happen; I was too much engaged in what was happening.

Count Beula struck the enemy first, and, but for a shot from Batori's pistol, that moment would have ended his career. I wished later it had.

Crash we went into the midst of them, the long lances boring a passage for their owners.

Von Theyer made a dash at me, but was thrown back; and we did not get within sword-arm of each other during the fight.

Still, I had ample work without troubling the Austrian leader, as several hussars, attracted no doubt by my uniform, made a desperate attempt to hem me in.

A loud cry announced that one man had got through.

It was Batori; but he dashed back into the *mêlée* in order to rescue a wounded follower.

His men, raised to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by this sight, shook their opponents off and spurred to the spot.

A young Austrian officer--a sublieutenant, I judged--rode at me furiously, leaving me barely time to parry his stroke.

Turning, he came again, when a terrific blow from a loaded hatchet brought his horse to the ground--dead.

The youngster scrambled to his feet and attacked his new enemy; but the bandit pushed on to join his leader, and I followed with Count Beula.

We two were the last to leave the press, and the Austrians were hot on our heels.

Von Theyer led the van, though he had been badly wounded, and his face was covered with blood.

Now that the brunt of the fight was over, my companion seemed again to fall under the spell of his strange fear, being blind to everything except escaping.

He spurred his horse cruelly, until the animal, maddened by pain, darted ahead, and I was left alone.

Von Theyer, yards in advance of his hussars, galloped on; and I heard him shouting, but could not distinguish the words.

Fortunately, my pistols were still loaded, and, drawing one from the holster, I turned in my saddle and fired.

Von Theyer was not hit; but his gallant horse, staggering forward a dozen paces, reeled and fell.

The hussars stayed to extricate their leader, and the delay gave me a little breathing space.

Once again I wheeled and rode on in pursuit of Count Beula, while a shot from a carbine whistled past my head.

Two others followed in quick succession, doing no harm--at least, that was my impression.

Rather strangely though, it appeared to me that the count was slackening speed, and soon I became certain of it.

The distance between us decreased. I was catching him up hand over hand; the thing was amazing.

I hoped at first his manhood had come back to him, and that he waited purposely for me; but soon I recognized the truth.

One of the shots intended for me had struck his horse in the haunches, and the poor animal, losing blood at every stride, was growing feebler each succeeding moment.

The bandits--at least those who survived--were a little ahead of us; the pursuers were closing up again; my companion was doomed.

He knew it too. His face had become ashy grey, his eyes were wild and staring; the Count Beula of the breach and the battlefield had disappeared.

"They will hang me, Botskay," he wailed--"hang me like a common thief on the roadside."

The terror of the hempen noose, about which Batori had chaffed him, had affected his brain--upset his balance, so to speak. I can give no other explanation of his strange behaviour or of what happened immediately afterwards.

Batori, looking back, waved his arm to bid us ride faster; but Beula's horse was totally exhausted, and with one last ineffectual stagger forward it rolled over, entangling its rider in the reins.

A shout from the Austrians greeted this downfall, and the count's white face looked up appealingly.

"They will hang me, Botskay!" he cried, and I regarded the cry as one for help.

The Austrians were close upon us. There was barely time even to set him free; and what then?

Was I to die because the man I hated asked an impossible thing?

It was monstrous; it was out of all reason. I would push on and save my own life. Count Beula had no claim on me.

The struggle was keen and full of bitter anguish, but it was over in a second; the next I had slipped to the ground and was tugging at the fallen man.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE END OF COUNT BEULA.

You who have read my story know that from the very beginning I disliked this Count Beula; and the death of my gallant brother, which rightly or wrongly I laid at his door, changed my dislike into downright hatred.

Yet throughout this narrative I have, I trust, never shown myself unfair to him. I have told freely how Bern, himself the most reckless of fighters, had praised his courage, and in my account of the storming of Buda I made no attempt to hide his gallantry. Even in this last fight I have mentioned how bravely he rode at the Austrian hussars, and how the glow of health had returned to his cheeks as he bared his weapon for the fray.

No, I am fully persuaded in my own mind that Count Beula did not fear death, but only the manner of it.

Leading or repelling a desperate charge, cheering his men to the deadly breach, or hurling the enemy from the ramparts of an assaulted town, he would have met death cheerfully and without flinching.

Here, on this lonely road, he was not even a soldier. The Austrians regarded him merely as a plotter, an accomplice of the conspirators in Vienna, an instigator of Count Latour's murder, the boon companion of a brigand whose life was forfeit even to Hungarian laws.

Thus the fiat had gone forth that Count Beula, the representative of a noble family, the head of a house celebrated long before the days of Arpad, was to be taken and hanged straightway like the vilest malefactor in the land.

The very thought of this terrible disgrace had, as he admitted, unnerved him; its imminent approach drove him crazy. This, I am fully convinced, was the real reason for his astounding conduct.

The robbers were by this time too far off to render any aid, though several glanced over their shoulders to see what was happening. The hussars had got very close to us.

My horse quivered with excitement, but did not move while I, after several attempts, set the count free.

Exactly what was to be done I had not determined, though it occurred to me that my animal must carry double, or that while Beula rode I must hang on by the stirrups.

In either case, no doubt, I should have been killed or taken prisoner; but the count solved the difficulty in his own way. He looked a strange object as he sprang to his feet. Blood from a wound in the head trickled down his ashy-grey cheeks; his blue eyes stared wildly; he seemed like a man possessed, as I really believe he was.

He glanced at the approaching Austrians and shuddered; then, without a word of warning, he leaped into my saddle and was gone.

It all happened so suddenly that I stood dumfounded. That one of my race and nation could be guilty of such black treachery had never entered my head.

Wild, unreasoning anger succeeded stupor, and I shook my sword at the retreating figure; then anger yielded to pity.

Poor fellow! When the cloud had passed from his mind, what would life be worth to him, even if the story of his cowardice were never made known?

What misery each recurring day would bring, as he thought of the terrible price he had paid for his life--manhood, honour, chivalry, all irretrievably lost in that one mad moment!

For the count's own sake I almost wished that a shot from the enemy would bring him down.

Had I been able to look into the future, the half-wish would have changed into a whole-hearted prayer.

But apparently luck was with the count. My horse, having recovered his wind, bore him gallantly, gaining at every stride upon the last of the robbers.

All this takes long in the telling; in reality it lasted but a little time, though to me it seemed an age.

With Count Beula and my horse had vanished every hope of escape.

Flight was impossible, and how could I stand against a hundred hussars?

Then I remembered Von Theyer, and gnashed my teeth at the thought of how he would gloat over my capture.

Would he kill me? It was likely enough, since I had been found in company with a notorious outlaw, and not many questions are asked concerning the victims of an unsuccessful revolution.

The bandits had disappeared, and I was standing beside the body of the count's dead horse when the leading hussars galloped up.

Von Theyer was not amongst them, I saw at a glance, and smiled.

The leader was the young sublieutenant who had attacked me so furiously

in the fight.

He had mounted a fresh horse, but his sword was sheathed, and he looked at me quite good-naturedly.

"You must surrender!" cried he genially. "You have made a good fight, but the odds are against you. One man, though a Magyar, cannot overthrow a hundred."

He spoke in German, and I replied in the same tongue, giving him my sword, and acknowledging myself his prisoner.

Just then Von Theyer arrived, and with a savage scowl exclaimed harshly,--

"Tie that fellow up. Make sure of him, Ober, and put him on your horse. If he gets away, you'll swing in his place."

Ober, a spare but muscular hussar, saluted respectfully, and, helped by another fellow, tied my arms tightly.

Then they lifted me into the saddle; Ober sprang up behind, and we were all galloping hard after Batori and his men.

Von Theyer was in the front again, where I could not see his face; but the one glance had shown I need expect no mercy from him. Even if he forgave my making friends with the pretty Theresa, he must always hate the author of that disfiguring scar across his cheeks.

The wound had in truth spoiled his good looks for ever, and Von Theyer had been a very handsome youth in the days of the insurrection.

The excitement of the ride, however, soon blew these thoughts out of my head; and, as well as my cramped position would allow, I looked eagerly for any signs of the fugitives. Of Batori and his men we did not catch another glimpse; but the brigand chief left us a specimen of his handiwork on the roadside. Von Theyer was the first to see it, and as he stopped the others did the same.

It was a ghastly object, and my blood ran cold at sight of it.

From the bough of the very first tree we reached Count Beula hung lifeless.

Across his breast was fastened a sheet of paper, on which some one had written in Hungarian and German characters the words: "Hungary has no need of cowards."

"The brigand has saved us a job," exclaimed Von Theyer. "If we catch him we'll hang him on the same tree."

Now you may be sure I had no wish to ask a favour of Von Theyer, yet the spectacle of the hapless count swinging there in the breeze nerved me to ask that the body might be cut down and decently buried.

"Buried!" cried Von Theyer scornfully. "Let the dog hang. The kites will bury him fast enough when we are gone."

"You are a brute!" I cried hotly, caring little in my indignation for the consequences.

He raised his hand to strike me, but dropped it again.

"We will square our account later," he said, and gave the word to trot.

We rode on accordingly, but I could not drag my mind from that dreadful place.

I saw nothing of the country through which we passed. I could only see the grey face of the dead count staring down upon me from that primitive gallows.

I never met Batori again, but one of his men years afterwards related just how the tragedy happened.

The bandits, seeing me jump down to the count's assistance when his horse fell, and thinking my animal would have to carry the two of us, slackened their speed, so that we might the more easily catch them up.

When Count Beula arrived by himself, and they, looking back, saw me standing alone beside the dead horse, it was easy to guess what had happened.

The count, who was dreadfully excited, made no attempt to hide what he had done, but explained that had the Austrians captured him they would have hanged him on the nearest tree.

"Or beam," added Batori coolly.

"Tree or beam," answered the count. "That's the order which refers to both of us."

"Well," said the brigand, with the laugh his men dreaded to hear, "we shall have to ride a bit farther before we find one or the other. Come on, count! I'll pledge my word that the Austrians shall never hang you!"

Count Beula, little dreaming of the inner meaning of these words, galloped along with the band, and not another word was spoken till they reached the first tree.

Here the robber-captain called a halt, and making a sign that some of the party should surround the count, said to him,--

"This is where the Austrians would have hung you; but now, perhaps, they will hang Captain Botskay instead."

At this Beula, discovering a little shame, replied falteringly that they would only imprison me for a while; but as for him, he would never have got one step past that tree.

As soon as he had made an end of speaking, Batori raised his hand. The count was seized, torn from his horse, bound, a noose put round his neck, and he was placed directly beneath the fatal bough.

"Count Beula," cried the bandit, "you are a coward, and Hungary has no need of cowards. You have left that lad, who risked his life for you, to die. Now you shall die yourself. Though the Austrians have not caught you, you shall be hanged all the same."

The unhappy man begged piteously--not for his life, but that he might be

shot.

Batori, however, remained inexorable, and while the poor wretch was still pleading gave the order. The men pulled at the rope, and the body of Count Beula hung swinging in the wind for the vultures and carrion crows to devour.

Thus, in the strangest way imaginable, it came to pass that Count Beula did hang like a common criminal by the roadside, though the Austrians were not his executioners.

I pitied the poor fellow from my heart, feeling sure that when he left me to face the enemy alone excitement had carried him out of his right senses.

As we rode from the spot I could of course only guess at the details of the tragedy, and indeed years passed before I met one of the actors; but the outline of it was so bold and clear that no one could mistake the general drift of the story, especially with Batori's sign-manual to help.

It gladdened me in after years to learn that the unfortunate count did not really fear death, but only the manner of it, as that was how I had read his conduct.

Wrapped in thoughts of this terrible tragedy, I did not at first notice that my captor's horse had dropped to the rear; for though neither Ober nor I carried any superfluous flesh, the double weight told heavily upon the animal.

The difference was more marked when Von Theyer changed the trot into a gallop; and I suddenly became alive to the fact that were my arms free, I might yet make an effort to escape.

But how was I to work this miracle?

The cords were strong, the knots skilfully tied, my arms were in a vice, while close behind me sat the Austrian trooper armed with sword and pistol.

However, life is sweet, and I set to work under cover of the horse's movements to try, by contracting my muscles, to ease the bonds.

I cannot say how long the attempt lasted, but the knots on my wrist were certainly looser, when a grim "Very sorry, captain, but the game won't work" blew my newly-formed hopes to the winds.

"It isn't that I want you hanged," continued the hussar, "but I'd rather see the rope round your neck than mine, and the colonel's in such a very ugly temper there's no knowing what might happen."

The fellow spoke so coolly that I could hardly keep from laughing, though, from my point of view, there was little humour in the situation.

However, my disappointment was not very keen, as I had hardly allowed myself to hope for success.

The Austrian, frightened a bit perhaps at seeing I did not think escape an impossibility, urged on his horse, resolved to keep within easy reach of his comrades.

Towards evening we entered the village where I had stayed the previous

day, and Von Theyer ordered a halt.

The brigands had disappeared entirely, leaving no trace, and our horses were thoroughly done up.

I looked round eagerly in search of my four acquaintances, but in the whole place there was not a man except the landlord of the inn to be seen; evidently the male villagers did not appreciate a visit from the Austrian cavalry.

Von Theyer was, as my jailer had remarked, in a very ugly temper, and scowled at me savagely as Ober pulled up his weary horse.

"Put him in there," said he, pointing to the kitchen of the inn. "And don't forget it's your life or his."

Ober saluted and grinned.

"I'll take precious care it isn't mine, colonel," he answered.--"Here, Franz, lend me a hand."

The hussars dispersed, and entered the cottages in search of food, while I was pushed into the kitchen and dumped down not too softly on the floor.

Ober and the man called Franz remained on guard, and very kindly gave me a share of the black bread, fat bacon, and sour wine which formed their supper.

The food was hardly suitable for delicate stomachs, but my last meal had been supper on the previous night, and I was not in a mood to be particular.

Von Theyer, I suppose, went to see that everything was made safe, as he did not come in till nearly dark, and then passed with two other officers to the inner room.

He spoke a word to Ober, but took no more notice of me than if I had been a log of wood.

"Colonel's in one of his black fits," grumbled Ober to his comrade. "He'll make us smart for not catching that brigand."

"Wait till he does. Time enough to grumble then," replied the other coolly. "Who's going to take the first watch--you or I?"

Ober leaned over to examine my fastenings.

"Ach!" growled he. "We might as well both go to sleep. The Magyar's safe enough, and I'm as tired as a dog."

"All right. It's your head at stake--not mine. But we'll make doubly sure;" and getting some more rope, he tied me to himself.

Ober did the same on the other side, and then lay down so that I was between the pair of them.

Presently the door opened, and half a dozen hussars coming in, wrapped themselves in their long coats, and settled down to sleep.

I cannot say how they had fared in the matter of food, but their breath made it plain they had discovered plenty of liquor.

Night came. The sound of conversation in the colonel's room died away. In

the kitchen all was silent save the loud snoring of the half-drunken men.

In the silence and darkness I made an effort to set myself free; but a few trials convinced me that Ober had made no mistake.

True, he and Franz were so exhausted by their forced marches that even a smart tug failed to waken them; but, on the other hand, the knots were so skilfully tied that it was impossible to loosen them.

At last I abandoned the attempt and tried to sleep, but the haunting face of the dead count and anxiety on my own behalf made that no easy matter.

It was strange that Von Theyer had not hanged me at once, and I wondered why he should wish to save my life.

I felt sure it was not out of kindness, and concluded he was governed by the same feelings that lead a cat to play with its victim.

Just here my reverie was broken by an astounding circumstance.

One of the hussars, turning about in his sleep, had brought himself close to the feet of the Austrian Franz, and by a series of wriggling movements was constantly changing his position.

Of course I could not see him plainly, but I could tell that the dark figure was moving, though very, very slowly, until it reached my head.

I lay perfectly still, save for the violent beating of my heart, which would not be controlled.

What did this by-play mean?

Naturally, perhaps, my first thoughts flew to Von Theyer. But then he had no need of foul play. By twisting his orders a little he could easily justify himself in swinging me up, and who was ever likely to question his action?

No, it could not be Von Theyer; but that only deepened the mystery.

Very stealthily a hand crept from the folds of the cloak, and in the fingers was something which glistened.

At this my heart gave one great throb, and then seemed to cease beating.

The glittering object was a long, straight knife, and as the sheen of it fell across my eyes I tried, but tried in vain, to shout for help.

"Be still!"

The words were spoken in Hungarian, hardly above a breath, and I fancied there was a somewhat familiar ring in the voice.

I lay quite quiet, not attempting to speak, and the knife, creeping down, began to rub edgewise against the cords that fastened my wrists.

The steel was sharp, the worker a master-hand, and the hempen threads fell apart as if by magic.

A sharp jerk would have set my wrists free, when Franz stirred uneasily, and though not even half awake, tugged at the rope which bound me to him.

Then he turned over again and was as soundly asleep as ever.

It was a terrible moment for the three of us, but most terrible of all for the unconscious Franz.

The dark figure at my head lay motionless, but the hand underneath that innocent-looking coat held, firmly grasped, a sharp, keen blade.

However, the danger past, the knife again slid down and finished its work. The fellow then wriggled round to our feet, and cut the cords on my legs; only the ropes binding me to my guards remained to be severed.

My excitement grew to an intense pitch; I had to force myself into silence. I wanted to jump up and scream aloud.

My unknown rescuer had apparently no nerves. The steel was pushed forward steadily, without a tremor, and the rope which bound me to Franz was cut.

One link alone remained, and I thought my brain must give way under the strain.

Several of the hussars tossed restlessly, muttering unintelligible words, while here in the very midst of them, within a few yards of their leader himself, was this daring adventurer calmly setting free the victim of that leader's vengeance.

Twice, owing to a trooper's restlessness, he had to stop; but my unknown saviour was as patient as daring, and after each halt he resumed his work.

With the snapping of the last thread I felt as if I really must break into a fit of hysterical laughter, or waken Von Theyer by a defiant taunt; but, alas! my childish glee was soon over. As I was stealing cautiously away, Ober sprang to his feet.

In an instant two dark figures were grappling with each other, swaying this way and that; then a loud cry of "Treachery!" came from the Austrian; there was a swift flash of steel, and poor Ober sank, groaning.

"This way!" shouted my rescuer, and I darted after him towards the door.

The troopers jumping up tried to stop us, but the stranger knocked down several with some heavy weapon, and cleared a passage.

The confusion was tremendous, and the officers, coming from their apartment, vainly endeavoured to find its cause.

We were at the door, outside, free!

"Follow!" cried the stranger, without wasting words; but as he turned for the open country, dozens of troopers poured into the street.

My guide dashed away, and was lost in the darkness, and I should have got clear but for one of the hussars, who flung himself right across my path.

Down I went with a crash, and though rising quickly, a smart blow on the head behind sent me sprawling, and the next instant I was in the midst of the

angry crowd.

CHAPTER XXV.

IMPRISONED AT ARAD.

Von Theyer met me at the inn door, but he was busy giving orders that a detachment of troops should mount and scour the district.

Candles and flaring torches burned in the kitchen, and by their light I saw three men, all badly wounded, lying side by side.

At the farther end of the apartment lay Ober, and the hussars pulled and hustled me towards his body.

Poor fellow! He was quite dead, and close by I saw the keen blade, now stained with blood, that had slain him.

His comrades uttered loud threats of vengeance, and one man, pressing the muzzle of his pistol against my forehead, swore he would shoot me.

Another pulled him back, saying he might safely leave me to the colonel, who would not fail to avenge the dead hussar.

For myself, I was in a state of utter bewilderment, and looked at the brawny, rough-voiced men like a dazed child.

The long-continued excitement and the dramatic close of the incident had for the time clouded my brain, and, beyond the fact that Ober was dead, I grasped nothing clearly.

Then above the babel of sounds I heard a voice ordering in tones of command that my arms should be bound afresh.

This the men did very willingly, and in their anger they tied the knots so tightly that the pain almost caused me to faint.

Then two of them led me into the next room, where Von Theyer sat, with a pair of pistols on the table beside him.

"That will do," he exclaimed harshly. "Leave him there. Now go outside and wait. Don't be frightened if you hear the report of a pistol. I'm in no danger."

The men saluted and withdrew, leaving me facing their colonel.

At the sight of that face with the hideous scar my senses and my manhood returned to me. I remembered that I came of a race of Magyar nobles, and resolved

to show myself worthy to bear their name.

"George Botskay, once a so-called captain in the rebel army, but now an associate of thieves and murderers, I demand to know the name of the villain by whose aid you have stabbed an unoffending man to death."

At this implied accusation of a cowardly crime my face flushed, and I cried hotly,--

"I throw the lie in your teeth, Colonel von Theyer. My hands are free from innocent blood, as you well know, though it may suit your purpose to declare otherwise."

Von Theyer laughed, and his lips assumed a cruel curve that was not pleasant to see.

"You are right," said he coldly. "It does suit my purpose. Can you guess why I did not hang you by the side of your friend Count Beula? I had another plan, and this night's work has made its success certain. Look at me, George Botskay, and see for what I have to thank you. In Vienna you worked me harm enough, but this, this--" And he half choked as he laid his hand on his scarred cheek.

"I am truly sorry for your disfigurement," I replied, "but it happened in the heat of battle and with no malice on my part."

"Perhaps when I have made you suffer I shall be sorry too," he said flippantly. "We shall see. I could hang you now--your life is forfeit to the laws; but that is not my wish. I am going to brand your name, so that it shall be carried to Vienna as the name of a common thief and assassin. I will make the Austrian government your judge and your executioner. When you have been publicly disgraced and hung, Fräulein Theresa may not be quite so proud of her Hungarian friend."

"You are a coward and a scoundrel," I cried contemptuously, "and may do as you please;" but for all my brave words the barbed shaft had struck home.

Von Theyer saw this, and was beginning to laugh, when he caught sight of the locket, which showed through my disordered apparel.

Apparently he recognized it, as he sprang forward to remove it; and then he saw the baron's ring.

"Oh, oh!" he cried; "this is famous! So you have been robbing the dead! I think this will add an extra spice to my revenge."

Dragging the ring from my finger, he called his men to take me away and guard me closely.

By this time day was breaking; and the soldiers, unable to sleep, got ready their morning meal.

As no one offered me any, I went without, which was not an agreeable method of beginning the day.

However, they gave me plenty of rope instead, and I was firmly fastened on Ober's horse, while two men with levelled pistols rode one on either side of me.

The detachment sent out during the night met us a few miles from the village, and the officer reported they had been unable to find any trace of the mysterious stranger.

Talking amongst themselves, the hussars declared that the daring intruder must have been Batori Gabor, and I held that opinion too.

Rakoczy was a prisoner, and Mecsey Sándor far away, so that unless one of the disbanded soldiers had performed the deed, the robber-captain was the only person left to suspect.

However, the scheme had failed, and I was more strongly guarded than before.

Von Theyer gave the strictest orders to the two troopers, one of whom was Franz, the comrade of the dead Ober.

This man eyed me most maliciously, and I felt sure he would be a splendid tool in furthering the colonel's scheme.

From boyhood, riding had been one of my chief pleasures; but this new style, tied hand and foot and bound to a horse's back, was a novelty I did not appreciate.

Towards noon we halted beside a pleasant stream, a tributary of the Maros; and having attended to the animals, the men sat down to their frugal dinner.

Now, since there is no satisfaction to be obtained in hanging a dead man, Von Theyer was compelled to give me some food; and this, with the temporary freedom of my arms, was a great relief.

Having finished their black bread and cheese, most of the men began to smoke. Some rolled out their greatcoats and went to sleep, while others played strange games with packs of well-thumbed cards.

The halt lasted perhaps two hours, when the bugles sounded, and we were again in motion.

By this time Von Theyer had evidently abandoned all hope of catching the robbers, as we rode at a sober pace, and finished the day's march long before sunset.

Our new quarters were in a fair-sized village, and I was rather amused by the precautions taken to ensure my safety.

Six men were placed in the same room, and a sentry was posted outside the door.

If any accident occurred during the night, the colonel promised to hang them all without exception; and as Von Theyer was a man of his word, the troopers regarded his threat with respect.

Poor fellows! In spite of my own risky position I pitied them; they were like men suffering from a bad form of nightmare.

After a meagre supper, quickly dispatched, my arms were rebound, and I

was bundled into a corner, the sergeant in charge of the guard warning me not to move, which was rather unnecessary advice.

Two of the hussars stood over me with drawn swords, the others sat on a bench waiting for their spell of duty. I don't think any of them went to sleep.

About midnight Von Theyer himself paid us a visit; and the guard, springing to their feet, presented arms.

He glanced round the room with an approving smile, and said,--

"Well, sergeant, I think your prisoner will have small chance of stabbing any one to-night."

The sergeant smiled at the compliment to his vigilance, and the colonel came over to my corner.

Not caring to bandy words with him before his men, I closed my eyes, pretending to be asleep, and after a minute or two he went away.

The night passed wearily enough, for although I managed to sleep, my rest was broken by feverish dreams, and I gladly welcomed the coming of another day.

For some reason unknown to me we did not set out till ten o'clock; and when, after an uneventful journey, we rode into the town of Arad, the autumn afternoon was fast blending into evening.

The inhabitants of the old market-town swarmed out to see the Austrian cavalry, and many glances of compassion and pity were directed on the bound and helpless prisoner in their midst.

A few expressed their sympathy audibly, but for the most part men, women, and children stood mournful indeed but silent.

Alas! the glory of the Magyar had departed. Henceforth my unhappy countrymen must bend beneath the whips of their Austrian masters.

Once we were startled by a mocking laugh from some one in the crowd, and Von Theyer frowned angrily as a clear voice sang out, "Let the colonel look to his guards. 'Twill be his turn next."

The Austrian dashed towards the spot whence the words came, but he met only the innocent faces of terrified people, and for very shame's sake he dared not punish them.

The voice roused me, for it was that of the man who had slain Ober in the kitchen of the inn; and now I knew the daring intruder had been Batori, the robber-captain.

Others also guessed the secret, and Franz riding up to the colonel whispered something in his ear.

Immediately the troopers were ordered to disperse, and in small parties to search every nook and cranny in both the old and the new town.

Meanwhile Von Theyer, with half a dozen men who acted as my escort, rode to the bridge which spans one arm of the Maros, and connects Arad with the spit

of land on which the fortress is built.

The last time I had passed that way the red, white, and green stripes waved proudly from the ramparts. Now the black and yellow flag hung from the walls--an outward and visible sign of our defeat.

A group of citizens stood on the river-bank to watch us go past, and my heart gave a great leap as I recognized amongst them the faithful Mecsey Sándor.

He had discarded his uniform, and was dressed in civilian costume, though he could not altogether disguise his military carriage.

His eyes looked straight into mine, and by a kind of dumb show he made me understand that Rakoczy was confined in Gros-Wardein.

Then our little cavalcade swept by, the gates were thrown open, and we passed behind the frowning walls of the fortress.

Here Von Theyer left us, and I soon received ample proof of how effectually he had blackened my character to the governor.

Instead of being treated as an honourable though beaten enemy, I was roughly thrust into a small, dark cell, bare of furniture, and left to my own reflections till the morning, when a jailer, attended by several soldiers, brought me some food and untied my bonds.

For this last attention I was extremely grateful, and ate my lump of dry black bread in an almost cheerful spirit.

But as day followed day without change, the gloom and monotony oppressed me like a heavy weight. I grew moody and depressed, and in spite of a hard struggle was gradually driven to look upon the dark side of things.

No news of any kind came to me in my narrow prison. The jailer refused to answer a question, saying the only matter I need trouble about was the date of my execution.

At first I dreamed of making my escape, but this idea was soon abandoned, as I saw how hopeless any attempt must be.

The cell door was of iron, the walls were strong and massive, and I had not so much as a nail to work with.

Almost my sole dependence lay in Mecsey Sándor, yet what he could do I could not imagine.

However, I tried hard not to despair, and resolved, if need be, to meet my fate bravely.

In this manner more than a fortnight passed, when one morning, about two hours after my breakfast of black bread and water, I was surprised to hear the tramp of marching feet, which stopped opposite my cell.

The key turned in the massive lock, the door opened, and I was harshly ordered to step outside.

A number of soldiers with bayonets fixed waited. I was placed in the midst

of them and hurried away.

These men belonged to an infantry regiment, and were strangers to me, but it was plain they had formed a very unfavourable opinion of my character.

Crossing the square, they halted in front of a low door, and the officer in command of the party signed to me to follow him.

An antechamber was filled with soldiers, fully armed and standing at attention, while their faces were about as human as chiselled stone.

Passing through, we entered a second apartment, where a dozen officers were seated round a baize-covered table littered with writing material.

Recognizing that these men held my life in their hands, I looked at them eagerly.

The president's chair was occupied by a tall old man with slightly-stooping shoulders, scanty white hair, and long, drooping, white moustaches.

His face was bronzed, and his breast covered with numerous ribbons and medals, but his blue eyes were rather dreamy, and I thought he had much ado to keep himself awake.

The officers who flanked him on either side of the table were of various ages, and belonged to different branches of the service, but they all sat as immovable as statues.

The silence was so weird and oppressive that I welcomed the sound of the president's voice when he began the proceedings by asking my name.

"George Botskay," I proudly answered.

"Captain in the rebel army?" he went on, reading from a slip of paper.

"Captain on the staff of General Görgei, commander-in-chief of the Hungarian national forces," I replied.

One of the stone griffins started into life at this, but the president petrified him again by a wave of the hand.

"Why did you not surrender with your leader?"

"Because I was absent on special duty."

"It is stated here," said he, tapping the paper, "that you were at Vilagos on the thirteenth of August."

"I was, but not with the army."

The other stone men showed signs of life now, and the old warrior continued his examination.

"Was it not your duty, as a soldier of honour, to obey your chief's orders, and to give yourself up to the proper authorities?"

"That view of the question did not strike me," I answered, and quite honestly too. "I was not with the army, and therefore did not consider myself included in the surrender."

"You preferred instead to join the band of a notorious robber?"

"That is false," I cried--"utterly false!"

The president, though he did not look like a merciful man, was exceedingly polite.

"I am afraid," he said, "that the facts are against you. Colonel von Theyer, one of our best officers--"

"A rebel turncoat," I interrupted angrily.

"I do not think, Herr Botskay, that abuse of a trusted officer will do your case any good. His report expressly states that you were discovered with this band of robbers. Do you deny the truth of the charge?"

"I cannot; but my being there was the result of blind chance."

The griffins actually smiled, which convinced me I was getting deeper into the mire, and that feeling was not lessened when the president said softly, "An unlucky chance for you, Herr Botskay, I fear."

"It is the truth for all that," I said stoutly.

"Did Count Beula meet the robbers by accident also?"

"I cannot say. I know nothing of him."

"Here again my information differs from your statement. The count was well known as an abettor of the massacres in Vienna, and it is laid down here that you were in personal communication with him at the beginning of the insurrection. Is that so?"

The ground seemed to be slipping from under me.

"Count Beula was never a friend of mine," I said.

"One does not always make a friend of an accomplice," replied the president suavely. "But here is another question. Is it true that on any single occasion you attended a meeting of the Hungarian Committee?"

"That is easily explained," I began. "When--"

"Pardon me, general," interrupted one of my judges, "but I should like the prisoner to give a direct answer--yes or no--to the question. It is a simple matter. Did he or did he not, in October of 1848, attend a meeting of the Hungarian Committee?"

"If you will not allow me to explain, I shall refuse to answer at all," I exclaimed.

"Then," said the man who had spoken, "we shall be forced to draw our own conclusions;" and he sat down very red, but triumphant, amid a hum of approval.

"There is one other matter on which you might like to say a word," remarked the president blandly, "and that is the doing to death of the trooper Ober."

To this I replied that the unfortunate man had not met his death at my hands, nor was I in any way responsible for the striking of the fatal blow.

Here again I was confronted by further proof of how finely my enemy had woven the meshes of my net.

According to the sworn evidence of the man Franz, he had seen the knife in my hand, and he had also seen me stab the hapless trooper to the heart.

On the evidence supplied to them my judges could so easily find me guilty of almost any crime that I took little interest in the rest of the proceedings.

Von Theyer had made such a skilful blend of fact and fiction that his story had all the appearance of unadulterated truth. On one point alone he had not fulfilled his threat; there was no allusion to the ring and miniature of the dead baron.

I believe the president did mention vaguely some other charges, but as I could not be shot or hung twice over, these did not much matter.

When he had finished his speech I bowed courteously, saluted the officers in military fashion, and followed the leader of the escort from the room.

Once again I was placed in the midst of the soldiers, and marched back to my cell, where they left me without a word. I sat down on the wooden bench which was my sole article of furniture, and tried to think over my position.

It seemed gloomy and hopeless enough, and turn which way I would, the only outlook was towards the scaffold.

As far as I could understand, the Austrians claimed the right to hang me on either of two grounds--the refusal to surrender with Görgei at Vilagos, and the fact that I was caught in the company of a notorious band of robbers.

The other points, such as my acquaintance with Count Beula and the slaying of the hussar, were mere garnishings, added by the wily Von Theyer to prejudice my judges, and prevent them tempering justice by mercy.

In this there could be no doubt he succeeded perfectly, and I felt certain that whatever I might put forward in my defence would prove of no avail.

Indeed it was likely enough my sentence had already been pronounced, and that at any moment I might be led out to execution. Every sound which reached my ears startled me, and a dozen times I stood up trying to calm the beatings of my heart.

But the day passed, and at night the jailer brought my black bread and water, and went away again as usual without saying a word. I ate and drank feverishly, and then lay down on the narrow bench wondering what would happen before the next setting of the sun. Very slowly and wearily the dark hours crawled along, until, utterly worn out, I fell asleep, to be awakened, it seemed almost immediately, by the rattling of keys and the creaking of the iron door. In an instant I sprang to my feet, and waited with taut-strung nerves for the final ordeal.

My visitor was the jailer, and as he placed my breakfast on the ground, I

burst into a peal of hysterical laughter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LED OUT TO EXECUTION.

I pass rapidly over the period of suspense which succeeded my examination.

Even now it is painful to look back on the time when I fully expected every hour of each ensuing day to be my last.

Yet night and morning came and went, and I still remained in the dark cell, unable to learn anything concerning my fate.

The only relief to the monotony was the coming of the jailer, and he was such a surly fellow that his visits gave me more pain than pleasure.

A whole week passed in this way, and then I was again taken from the cell and marched to another part of the fortress.

At every step I gazed round anxiously, expecting to see the preparations for my execution.

Young, strong, and healthy, I had no wish to die; yet this horrible uncertainty, this alternation of hope and fear, was actually worse than death.

The faces of the soldiers were stolid and impassive--nothing could be learned from them; while the officer did not even look at me. We crossed the courtyard, and my pulses throbbed with fresh hope as I was led into a spacious room, where a stout, florid man in military uniform sat at a table writing.

Only two of the escort had entered with the officer, and these stood with fixed bayonets.

The florid man left his chair, and pointing to another, said coldly,--

"Sit down there, Herr Botskay. By order of the general commanding, you are to answer these questions in writing, an hour being given you for the task."

To all appearance I was quite cool, but the blood surged through my veins like a rushing torrent, and I could not see the questions on the paper for dizziness.

Apathy and despair vanished. The latent spark of hope kindled into a fresh flame. Here was another chance of life and freedom. Alas! my new and beautiful castle was built on very frail foundations.

The questions numbered nearly a dozen, and were framed in such a manner

that by answering them without adding the fullest explanations I should only make my case worse.

A quarter of an hour passed, and I still sat staring stupidly at my blank sheet of paper.

The soldiers stood grimly at attention, the officer leaned on his sword, the stout man sat writing stolidly; no sound but the monotonous ticking of the clock and the beating of my own heart broke the silence.

At last, seizing the pen, I began to write--not in answer to the questions, but a short account of what had passed between Von Theyer and myself, and an explanation of how I came to be in the company of Batori Gabor.

It was rather a lame performance, its chief merit being to afford a reason for Von Theyer's persecution; and when the official came to witness my signature, I felt it would do me but little good.

Another week passed--a week of heart-wearing suspense--before I was again called to attend the court.

A single glance at the faces of my judges extinguished the tiny spark of hope which struggled to keep alive in my breast.

The president spoke in impressive tones, every word sounding distinctly in the quiet room.

It was a long speech, but the whole of it might easily have been compressed into a dozen sentences.

On the first two counts--refusing to surrender at Vilagos, and joining a band of notorious outlaws--I was unanimously found guilty, and sentenced to death.

After this, one would have thought the rest to be of little interest, but the president gravely continued his remarks.

The unlawful killing of Ober was also considered proved, and on the various other charges laid against me the court expressed no opinion.

"Therefore," concluded the president in a solemn voice, "it becomes my painful duty to tell you, George Botskay. that on the second morning from this you will be led out to execution in the market-place of this town, that your death may act as a warning to all those who vainly hope to oppose the imperial government."

My limbs trembled, the blood left my face, but, managing to control my voice, I said calmly, "As a soldier, general, you will know a soldier's feelings. I do not plead for mercy, but there is one favour I would like to beg."

"Speak on, Herr Botskay. It may be in our power to grant it."

"Then I ask that you will at least permit me to die the death of a soldier, and not that of a criminal."

"That," responded the old man, "is impossible, since you ceased to be a soldier when you joined Batori Gabor. As a brigand you were captured, as a brigand you

must suffer;" and he waved his hand, directing that I should be removed.

Back again in the lonely cell, my first feeling was one of relief that the period of suspense had ended.

I could no longer be tortured by swift alternations of hopes and fears. The worst had come, and with it a feeling of apathetic stupor.

But the next day, as I sat measuring off the hours by guess-work, a revulsion of feeling set in.

Life was sweet, and all the throbbing vigour of my youth protested hotly against this violent and disgraceful death.

Had it come when I charged with Görgei at the head of our cavalry, or when beside my noble-hearted brother I scaled the ramparts of Buda, the glow of patriotism, of devotion to my outraged country, would have removed half its terrors; but now, in this guise!

Then my thoughts turned to the faithful Mecsey; to John Rakoczy, my true and gallant friend, whom I should never again see; finally passing to the Austrian maiden, whose fair face had never faded from my memory.

Would she believe the untruths which Von Theyer would but too surely circulate?

I shuddered to think what terrible stories his fertile brain might invent when I was no longer able to give them the lie.

Yet, through it all, I never quite lost hope that the beautiful girl would keep her faith in my truth and honour; and this feeling sufficed to raise me from the slough of misery into which I was sinking.

Night came at length, and the surly jailer brought my last supper, which I forced myself to eat.

Then, after a solemn hour spent in prayer, I lay down on my hard bench and slept peacefully as a child.

I had no means of telling the time, but the jailer apparently wakened me earlier than usual, and I was led into a room where, instead of the usual bread and water, a proper breakfast was laid. The apartment was filled with soldiers; and when I had finished, two of them, stepping forward, pinioned my arms tightly behind my back.

It was, as near as I could judge, about ten o'clock when the governor entered, and, after a brief talk with one of the officers, ordered the procession to be formed.

The air was keen, though the sun shone brightly overhead, as we proceeded slowly to the courtyard, where the soldiers halted.

Two other detachments now joined us, and in the midst of each a prisoner walked bareheaded.

They were both officers in Bern's army of Transylvania, so I did not know them, but we exchanged glances of pity and goodwill.

One was an old man with scarred face and white, flowing beard, a veteran Pole, who had spent his life in warfare against the enemies of his country.

His fellow-victim was quite young, hardly older than myself; but he bore himself as proudly as his comrade, gazing at the Austrians without a tremor.

After a delay of ten minutes the arrangements were completed, and the booming of a big gun announced to the townsfolk that the mournful procession was about to issue from the gates of the fortress.

The soldiers closed up their ranks, the order was issued, and we set out, my escort being the last of the three.

I tried hard to march with steady step and unfaltering countenance, but it was hard work.

The fresh morning air, the bright October sun, the merry flight of birds overhead, even the gaudy uniforms of the soldiers, spoke of life, and I was going to lose it.

A lump rose in my throat as we passed through the gateway, but I remembered I was a Magyar, and choked it down.

The pain and misery would soon be at an end, and the white-coats must not think me a coward.

At minute intervals a gun was fired from the ramparts, and the church-bells of the town tolled mournfully in response.

Crossing the one bridge which had not been destroyed during the war, we entered the town proper.

I was astounded at the spectacle.

Two lines of soldiers with loaded rifles guarded the route to the market-place, and kept back the crowds of people who stood on tiptoe and craned their necks in eager anxiety to catch a last view of those about to die.

Not the populace of the town alone had assembled, but the inhabitants of all the surrounding districts had come in thousands to show respect to the victims of Austrian cruelty.

The women sobbed as we went by, and looked at us with a yearning pity that almost broke down my composure. The eyes of the men flashed with fierce hate, and I thought it well that these brave Magyars had no weapons.

Little children were held up in the arms of their fathers to see us, and were that day taught a lesson which they would not forget in many years.

The nearer we approached our destination the denser the crowd became, while the market-place itself was so packed that several persons died of suffocation.

There, during the preceding night, an enormous wooden stage had been erected, and in the centre was a tall gallows.

At the sight of this, I confess freely, my heart sank, and I feared that my

courage would desert me.

Now just at this moment I saw the face of the gallant Mecsey Sándor, which acted on my nerves like a strong tonic.

The faithful fellow stood in the very foremost of the crowd, immediately behind the soldiers, and opposite the steps by which the wide platform was reached.

He was very mournful, yet the look in his eyes expressed something more than sorrow.

"Courage, my sweet master, and God bless you!" cried he boldly, while I, turning my head, smiled to show I understood.

"Courage, George Botskay!" exclaimed a second voice. "The Austrians cannot kill your name, which will never die in Magyar-land."

The man who spoke was standing next Mecsey, and I stared in amazement at beholding Dobozy.

What was he doing there?

If he were free, why not "John the Joyous?"

So great a longing suddenly seized me to look on the dear fellow's face once more that I was unnerved, and only by a great effort kept myself from stumbling.

Several other voices now cried, "God bless you, captain!" and I became aware that many men of my old regiment were grouped around Mecsey Sándor and Dobozy.

I smiled a last farewell at them, but my aching eyes sought in vain for the noble figure of their colonel, and I concluded he was still a prisoner, or dead.

Right round the ghastly structure a cordon of troops had been drawn, the space inside being occupied by a regiment of hussars.

Even before meeting him I knew instinctively that Von Theyer was at their head, and the knowledge gave me added courage.

He, at least, should never guess the tortures that I suffered.

I walked firmly, with head erect, gazing boldly at my bitter enemy. He was on horseback, almost at the foot of the wooden steps which led to the scaffold, so that but for my guard I should have brushed against him in passing.

His eyes, full of cruel hatred, met mine; but I trust they detected no sign of fear or blenching in my face.

I mounted the steps, and as the soldiers placed me beneath the gallows a low, deep hum of pity rose from the crowd.

The two officers from Bern's army were stationed some distance away on my right, and the governor, stepping to the front, began reading in a loud, clear voice some official document.

It was a wonderful and impressive scene. The huge platform, with half a dozen high officials and two firing parties; the bronzed hussars, in brilliant uniforms, sitting their horses like statues; the ring of infantry, with the sun shining

on their bright, steel bayonets the hushed crowd beyond, angry but impotent--furnished a spectacle that those who beheld never forgot while life lasted.

The governor continued to read, and as he read a little bird with cherry-coloured throat and gay plumage came and perched itself near me on the frowning gallows.

I was watching the tiny fellow with interest when a cry from the crowd, as of pain wrung from some animal, greeted the end of the governor's speech.

The fatal moment was fast approaching, and I cast a farewell glance at Mecsey and his companions.

The faithful fellow was in a state of terrible excitement, those around him being hardly less moved.

Their faces alternated with hope and fear, grief, rage, despair, anxiety--in short, all the passions that the human face is capable of expressing. But, above all, it seemed to me they were waiting.

Waiting for what?

The idea which suddenly flashed across my mind made me tremble. Was it possible that these great-hearted men were mad enough to dream of a rescue?

From my heart I hoped and prayed this was not the secret of their excitement.

The thing was utterly impossible, and could only lead to the shedding of much innocent blood.

Life had never seemed so glorious a possession as it did just then, but I would have forfeited it a hundred times rather than expose those thousands of men and women to the horrors of an Austrian butchery.

Yet I was powerless to avert the evil, if, indeed, the trusty Mecsey had planned such a mad project.

However, in a few brief moments now everything would be decided. My fellow-victims were to suffer first, and, kneeling in the positions appointed, they submitted to the bandaging of their eyes.

I kept my head steadfastly turned from the cruel scene, as did the vast majority of the crowd.

The firing parties advanced.

"Long live Hungary!" cried the younger soldier.

"Long live Poland!" cried the veteran, the voices of both being equally cool and collected.

"Fire!"

The report of the volleys rang out, and a groan burst from the spectators.

From the victims themselves there came not a sound.

When next I looked round, the two bodies had been removed, and the governor was beginning to read from a second paper. It was a recital of my various

crimes, and the sentence pronounced by the military tribunal.

Slowly, expressively, giving each word with due distinctness, he read on, while I watched Mecsey's face, and prayed that the speech might come to an end before mischief was done.

Yet, all unknown to me, the question of my life or death hung on the length of time occupied by that pompous old man.

It could not be said I had abandoned hope, since, after the finding of the court-martial, I had never entertained any; all my suspense now was centered in the action of Mecsey and his companions.

That their presence, and the selection of their particular position, was due to some settled purpose, there could be little doubt; and I felt equally sure that every man of that desperate party was in possession of hidden weapons.

What was the signal they waited for?

Suddenly, in the midst of the reading, there came a cry from the outskirts of the crowd--a cry caught up and repeated by thousands of voices, till the volume of sound rolled over the whole market-place.

Mecsey and his confederates threw their caps high into the air, and yelled like madmen; the governor, deadly pale, stopped his reading and called to Von Theyer, who hastily mounted the platform; the infantry, waiting for orders, gripped their rifles with grim resolution; the hussars bared their swords and prepared for the word to charge.

Yet the people made no attempt at a rescue; only in one place they formed a lane along which a horseman galloped frantically amidst such a wild outburst of cheering as Arad never knew before or since.

During those few moments I must have suffered more agony than falls to the lot of many men in a lifetime.

Of what was happening I had not the slightest idea, only I saw Von Theyer return to his men, and heard his short, quick words of command.

At the same time the infantry faced about and presented a steel-girt barrier to the crowd.

Yet the cheering did not cease--it grew louder; and now we on the platform could hear such words as "The Kaiser! Long live Francis Josef! Long live the Kaiser!"

At the first sign of danger the soldiers on the platform surrounded me in a body, and the executioner was already arranging the noose when the horseman reached the line of infantry.

What he said I knew not, but those sturdy warriors opened their ranks. He dashed through, and when in the open space Von Theyer would have turned him back, he struck him from the saddle, at the same time shouting out something in a loud tone.

Springing to the ground, he left his horse with heaving flanks and spume-flaked nostrils, and scrambled up the wooden steps, crying aloud and waving a large white envelope.

As one in a dream I watched him approach the governor and hand him the mysterious missive.

Then he turned to me, and I forgot all about death, for the strange messenger was "John the Joyous."

Never had the name fitted him more admirably. His cheeks were flushed with happiness; his eyes bright and sparkling; every feature had part in the joyous smile that overspread his handsome face.

I could not think or reason--in fact there was no necessity, for John Rakoczy had come.

The crowd shouted lustily until the governor, waving the white envelope, went to the edge of the platform.

Then the cheering ceased and all was silent save for the voice of the governor as he read from a sheet of paper the free pardon of His Most Gracious Majesty, Kaiser Francis Josef, to George Botskay, sometime captain on the staff of General Arthur Görgei.

He added some further words, to which the people responded with a wild cheer, and then began to disperse, while I stood dumfounded with the rope yet round my neck.

The market-place emptied slowly; the infantry formed up in companies and marched to the fortress; the hussars, headed by Von Theyer looking black and scowling, trotted off; only the governor's personal escort remained.

Then the old man harshly told me I was at liberty; and he, too, went away, leaving me with my chivalrous friend.

This startling swing back from the very brink of the grave left me weak and dazed. I had hardly sufficient strength to thank the man who had saved my life.

"Wait a bit," said he smilingly. "There will be plenty of time for all that. We have many things to tell each other, but you must get back a little strength first. Come, lean on me. Mecsey has a carriage ready, and I am going to send you to Gyula."

"Aren't you coming?"

"In a day or two. There is a little business in Arad to be settled first."

So greatly had my nerves been weakened by the shock that I did not guess what the business was, and permitted him to lead me away without protest.

At one of the inns Mecsey waited with a carriage, and many of the old Honveds stood in front of the house.

Dobozy was there too, and the true-hearted kindness of my former companions brought tears of gratitude to my eyes.

"The Joyous" wrapped me up comfortably, and giving Mecsey, who was to ride inside, many injunctions, shook my hand in a parting grasp.

"Rouse yourself!" cried he. "Dobozy and I are coming in a few days, and we don't want to be entertained by an invalid."

Dobozy added some lively badinage to cheer my spirits, the two waved their hands in farewell, the coachman cracked his whip, and we were off to the lonely homestead I had not visited during the last two years.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ALLIANCE.

"The Joyous" was certainly not acting up to his reputation.

We had just adjourned to the drawing-room after supper, and were sipping our coffee.

The light from the central lamp fell on Baron von Arnstein's ring and miniature.

"Von Theyer was wearing them, poor fellow!" exclaimed Rakoczy gloomily. "See! there is a bloodstain on the miniature!"

"Poor fellow, indeed!" cried Dobozy. "I've no patience with you. He is as much to be regretted as a vicious old tusker! Besides, after such a knock-down blow, you were bound to fight."

"The general opinion; though Schlick thought that, as the emperor's special messenger, I acted rightly."

"At all events, you saved my life, John," I interrupted.

"And now," Dobozy answered merrily, "he regrets it!"

"No, no!" cried John. "I would kill a hundred Von Theyers if they threatened George's safety. Still, this hussar was a splendid soldier, and brave as a lion."

"He was the finest cavalry leader in the Austrian service," I said.

"And tried his very hardest to get you hanged," laughed Dobozy.

"That's so!" exclaimed Rakoczy. "Still, I would rather have slain him on the battlefield than in a duel."

"While he preferred that Botskay should hang," observed Dobozy.

In my dazed state at Arad I had not thought of the consequences which must

follow Rakoczy's blow, but he and Dobozy knew the Austrian would be satisfied with nothing less than a duel to the death.

Indeed, my carriage had barely departed when several officers galloped up with demands for the most abject apology, unless my friend wished to receive challenges from all the officers of the regiment in succession.

To this Rakoczy replied good-humouredly that he had no quarrel with any one save their colonel, whom he would fight, and referred them to Dobozy as his friend.

A duel was accordingly arranged, in which Von Theyer fell, whereupon General Schlick forbade the officers of the regiment from carrying the matter farther.

All this had been talked over after supper, but the sight of the ring and miniature brought up the subject afresh.

At last, however, Rakoczy, shaking off his depression, settled down to explain how my pardon was obtained from the emperor.

"In the first place," he began, "everything is owing to Mecsey Sándor, who is the best and trustiest of servants."

Dobozy caused an interruption here by his emphatic approval of the remark.

"Seeing you in the hands of Von Theyer," Rakoczy continued, "he at once scented mischief, and returned to Gros-Wardein. There he hung about till I was set free, when he told me what had happened. Now, it struck me that unless the Austrian had a strong case, you would not have lived to reach the fortress. I scarcely knew how to act. Görgei was in prison, though pardoned, and I had no influence with the Austrian leaders. Here, again, Mecsey Sándor came to the rescue. 'Does not my master know some powerful ladies in Vienna?' he asked. That question furnished me with a key to undo all the locks."

"Then 'twas the fräulein who saved my life?" I cried.

"Or her mother," answered Rakoczy slyly. "But you are in a desperate hurry to reach the end of the story, which isn't a compliment to the teller."

"Go on!" I cried impatiently. "So you reached Vienna."

"But not in a second, my friend. The journey took time. However, I did get there, and found the ladies in mourning for the baron. Poor little Theresa was pale as a ghost, and her eyes were red with much weeping. Really it seemed cruel, to burden them with fresh sorrow. But your life was at stake, my boy, so I cast scruples to the winds and told them the story. They only knew the baron was dead; and when I related how you had nursed and afterwards buried him, even the baroness thawed and called on God to bless you."

"And Theresa?"

"She only spoke with her eyes, and some day you may discover for yourself what they said. To push on with the story, however--Dobozy's positively

yawning!--I told them how you had spoiled Von Theyer's beauty, winding up with an account of your imprisonment and almost certain execution, unless the emperor himself would interfere."

"And they agreed to petition him?"

"Yes. At first the baroness threw cold water on the scheme, saying it could not succeed; but Theresa wept and prayed so earnestly that her mother consented, and we all three set out immediately for the palace.

"By my advice Theresa sought an audience for herself only. Any woman in distress has influence over a man; but when one's petitioner is young and beautiful--well, there! You know more about these things than I do."

"Then the emperor received her?"

"Or you would not be here now. I intended to advise her what to say, but, bless you, she had it all mapped out."

"Trust a woman, old or young, for that," remarked Dobozy.

"'There are four chief points,' she said to me. 'The attempt to save Count Latour, which ought to count for much; his protection of my mother and myself; his kindness to my father, who was a great favourite with the young archduke before he ascended the throne; and his steady opposition to the scheme of separation.'"

"And the last is not the least," said I, delighted to find she had thought about it all.

"Well, we waited in the courtyard of the palace, the baroness seated in her comfortable carriage, I on horseback. About sixty times an hour I opened my watch--not the battered one--and wondered what was happening in the audience-chamber. Every time a door opened or a servant of the palace moved, my heart leaped to my mouth. The baroness, stately and dignified, sat bolt upright, as if nothing under the sun could trouble her, though I believe she felt keenly, nevertheless."

"These people," exclaimed Dobozy with an air of wisdom, "never obtrude their feelings in public."

"A second hour passed," continued Rakoczy, "and half of the third, when a door was opened, and Theresa, accompanied by a perfect escort of high functionaries, made her appearance. The first glance assured me all was right.

"She had been weeping--the tear-stains being still on her face--but her eyes were bright and sparkling now, and she ran to my horse's head with an *abandon* that must have shocked her mother.

"'Ride, Herr Rakoczy!' she exclaimed. 'Do not waste a second! Here is your friend's pardon, signed by the emperor's own hand. No, don't stop to thank me. If--if--oh, it would be too terrible!' and without a moment's warning she burst into tears.

"I was going to comfort her, but she dried her eyes, declared she was stupid,

and skipped off to the carriage.

"Then I doffed my hat to the ladies, wished them farewell, and galloped off. Luckily for you--and others--I arrived at Arad just in time."

By his mention of *others* I guessed there still remained something to be cleared up. But first I wished to make sure about a little matter which caused me some anxiety.

"How will Theresa learn that your journey ended successfully?" I asked.

"From the palace, no doubt. However, I took the liberty of sending a trusty messenger with a letter in which I stated that, as soon as you were strong enough, you would pay your thanks in person."

"Which I most certainly will do. Now tell me, please, whom you meant by the *others*."

"That's Dobozy's yarn, not mine."

"Or rather Mecsey's."

"And it had something to do with a public rescue?"

Dobozy laughed.

"About the maddest idea that ever occurred to any man outside the walls of a lunatic asylum. I never spent such a bad half-hour in my life. But for the colonel's arrival, I really can't say what would have happened. Mecsey was in deadly earnest, and he had so worked on the men of your old regiment that they were ready for anything."

"But the plan?" I exclaimed. "There must have been at least some glimmering of a plan?"

"Well, you see, this servant of yours believes in having two strings to his bow. According to him, the colonel's mission might or might not prove a success; so it was as well not to depend on it altogether. People say one fool makes many, and it was certainly so in this case. Learning that the 9th Honveds were to be dismissed, Mecsey pounced on the men, and wheedled them into promising their help. Then he came to me, explained what was going on, and asked me to lead. I pointed out the wickedness and folly of the scheme, but Mecsey was far superior to arguments. With a proper leader, he said, the men would win; without one they would fail; and if I wanted the thing to be wrecked, of course I wouldn't join. Well, to cut a long story short, I agreed. We got together all the weapons we could--long knives and axes mostly, though some of us had pistols--and waited.

"Mecsey was just urging me to give the signal for a rush at the platform, when some one in the secret sighted the colonel, and we knew it was all right."

"What an awful thing it would have been!" I exclaimed with a shudder.

"Well," said Dobozy, "the colonel saved the situation by about two minutes. I really believe though that Mecsey was a bit disappointed. He had a swift horse in waiting, and all we had to do was to rush the platform, knock over the soldiers, and

carry you off before the Austrians were aware of what was taking place. Mecsey would have made a great general."

"Now, George," exclaimed Rakoczy, when he had finished laughing at the idea of General Mecsey Sándor, "remember we haven't heard yet how you came to fall into the hands of the Austrians. It was rumoured in camp, before the surrender, that you were killed at Debreczin."

"Rumour would probably have proved true, but for the inestimable Mecsey," I replied. "He turned up as usual in the right place at the right moment, nursed me in the house of a good Samaritan, and journeyed with me to Vilagos. There we parted, as I expect he's told you."

"Yes; and the reason," said Rakoczy warmly.

"Well, instead of helping you out of a scrape, I got into one," and I related my adventures while with the band of robbers.

Both my listeners expressed astonishment at the conduct of Count Beula, and Dobozy frankly praised the bandit-chief for having hanged him.

"Yet he bore himself like a thorough soldier in the field," said Rakoczy, who rarely looked at the dark spots, even in the sun. "You may depend his nerves were overstrung. As to this Batori Gabor, I knew him well years ago. He belongs to a good family, but he fell foul of the Austrian police over some political matters, and took to the plains. I understand he did the enemy no end of damage during the war."

"He must be a daring fellow," exclaimed Dobozy with enthusiasm. "That was a bold venture, to creep into the kitchen amongst all those hussars."

"Almost as bold as Mecsey," I answered with a laugh; "but it is perhaps as well neither of them succeeded."

"Better," said Rakoczy, "as success in either case would have made you an outlaw; whereas you are now a free man."

"With liberty to visit Vienna whenever you like," laughed Dobozy; "but isn't it almost bed-time?"

Here, practically, my adventures with the red, white, and green flag come to an end. From that night in my old home with Dobozy and "John the Joyous" I date the beginning of a new life.

Gratitude, of course, and my promise to the dying baron took me to Vienna, where my reception encouraged me to pay several further visits, and in process of time my old friend's forecast was fulfilled. Theresa became my wife after her mother's death, and now there is no keener Magyar in all Hungary than Madame Botskay.

Every year we spend a couple of months in beautiful Pesth, and generally another month with the paralyzed Count Arnim and his wife, with both of whom Theresa is a great favourite, as indeed she is with most people.

The redoubtable Mecsey Sándor, who makes as faithful a steward as a soldier-servant, fairly worships her; and this is the more wonderful, because the honest fellow heartily detests the whole German race.

Mecsey is perfectly happy and comfortable, and spends his leisure time in describing over and over again the stirring events of the great campaign.

Occasionally Arthur Görgei--now a poor man living in retirement--comes to see us, and I need hardly say that no one save "John the Joyous" himself is ever more heartily welcomed.

Some men--but none on my estates--call him a traitor, and assert that he sold our country to the Russians. If Görgei betrayed his country, we of his army were accomplices in his treachery, and this is the proof.

We marched hundreds of miles, often bare-footed, over rough and stony ground; we half froze in the winter's cold, and fainted beneath the scorching heat of summer; for weeks together we lived on a scanty ration of black bread and water; we stormed fortresses and fought terrible battles when the odds were all against us; and the man whose spirit, courage, and leadership made these things possible was Arthur Görgei.

If such deeds as these were acts of treachery, then indeed were we all traitors, and our leader was far and away the greatest.

But the men who spoke thus wildly applauded Louis Kossuth as the most glorious patriot in history, and Kossuth was a fugitive in the land of the Turks!

It is the usual rule that the losers should be called on to pay for the game, and our opponents adhered to it closely.

With the exception of Görgei and Klapka, our chiefs were seized by the Austrians, and, after a mock trial, sentenced to death. Aulich, Damjanics, Nagy Sándor, with ten others, all perished on one day; while at Pesth the high-spirited Batthiany, the true leader of the national party, was shot in the presence of several thousands of his sorrowing countrymen.

Hungary indeed lay crushed under the heel of her Russian and Austrian conquerors, but since that day many events have happened. Our liberties have been restored, and now our country takes its rightful place as the ally and not the vassal of the haughty Hapsburg dominion.

A quarter of a century later, when my own boys, Stephen and John, were springing into early manhood, we all journeyed to Pesth to see the Emperor Francis Josef crowned King of Hungary.

"John the Joyous" was with us, and though his hair was sprinkled with white streaks, his heart had never felt lighter.

The boys were chiefly occupied in gazing at the gorgeous spectacle--the ermine-trimmed velvet cloaks of the councillors, the flashing mail of the nobles, the sparkling diamonds and precious stones, the magnificent horses, the robes

and mitres of the officiating priests.

To them it was a splendid procession; to us it was the fruition of hopes long deferred.

We thought of Görgei, of my brother Stephen, and of all the gallant men who had laid down their lives for the cause, and I think it was something more than the sun's rays which brought the water to our eyes.

And when the Austrian Emperor, robed in the embroidered mantle of St. Stephen, and crowned with the sacred crown, swore as King of Hungary to guard her rights and liberties against all foes, our hearts were full.

We felt that in the years long past our loyalty to the red, white, and green flag had not been altogether in vain.

THE END.

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE RED, WHITE, AND GREEN ***

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